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Public Speaking

without FEAR & TREMBLING

MARK HANNA



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DEDICATED TO

Donald Hutchins MacMahon
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CHAPTER 1

*Neither Hall nor Mrs. Mills ever
returned alive*

(If you want the happy clatter of applause, you must
know what audiences are interested in)

PETE . . . introduced me into Joey Fallon's speak-easy the same night.

Joey, a former racketeer who had served three short stretches, lived on the proceeds of the rot-gut he sold at two drinks for a quarter. His place was full of thieves. I singled out one Red Curtin—on the lam from Buffalo for a stick-up—as a likely partner in crime. But Red had no worthwhile jobs in sight, so his partner was called upon. The latter, named Slim, was a six-foot Polish-Jew—one of the best racket men I'd ever met. He suggested we go out on a pirate cruise, a new wrinkle of his own.

With Slim at the helm of our pirate ship—his Buick sedan—we cruised beyond the city's North Side. Slim sighted a well-dressed prospect and pulled in to the curb. I alighted and called to the man, asking if he could direct us to a certain street. When he came to within a few feet, I slipped out an automatic and told him to hop into the car. Bewildered, he obeyed, and Red lost no time in searching him. Eight blocks had been traversed when I gave Slim the word. He pulled in to the curb and we ejected the victim, minus \$60 and a watch and chain. We shot away, cruised to the East End, picked up a Greek, and pried \$200 out of his money belt. Then we called it a night. . . .

Then I met Dutch. He was introduced into Joey's place by Slim, who had worked with him previously. A big, raw-boned

man of thirty, he was just out of the pen. Naturally, he was broke. After working with him on a number of lesser jobs, I became convinced he was reliable. But Dutch was not a quick thinker. He could follow a set plan as long as things ran smoothly, yet when something went awry he was lost.

Big and businesslike, he stepped into a jewelry store. Red and I followed, just as Slim eased the car in front of the store. To my consternation, when I entered, I found Dutch standing in the center of the store, which was otherwise empty, while voices came from over the top of the glass partition that enclosed the jeweler's office on the side. Leaping past Dutch, I vaulted the counter. I had taken but two steps toward the office door when the proprietor, a huge Swiss, emerged. I snapped: "Up they go, big boy! Raise those hands!"

I swung him about with my left hand and shot him toward the office just as a crash shattered the silence. Someone in the office had hurled a heavy object through the front plate glass window. Then a door slammed and a shot rang out! I stepped backward so as to command a view of both office and store. Red was running along in the store, headed for the door, his gun smoking. I knew, as I took in the panorama, that in his wrath he had tried to slug Dutch. At that moment, Slim began blowing the horn; that meant a cop was in sight. Red glanced at the gathering throng, yelled "It's N. G.! Let's go!" and disappeared through the door. I leaped to the window, gathered up a tray of rings, and followed in Red's wake. . . .

The tray of rings, worth \$1000, eventually fetched \$150.*

If you are a person who enjoys tenderloin steak and French fried potatoes, if you like football, the purr of a good motor, and the feel of a dog's ear, the chances are that you have enjoyed reading the above excerpt from a David Purroy crime story, called "On the Lam," which appeared in the August, 1928, issue of *The American Mercury*.

Most people are interested in crime. Since this is not a book on psychology, sociology, or philosophy, no attempt will be made to explain this or give a reason. The fact is, most people are inter-

* Copyright by The American Mercury, Inc., 1928.

ested in crime and like to read about it. They like to hear about it, too. They may deplore it; they may combat it by ballot, law, or even a gun, but the activities of John Dillinger or Jack the Ripper fascinate the average human being, and crime is one of the fundamental, if somewhat negative, appeals for instant attention.

What has all of this to do with speech?

If you are going to be a speaker, you must be interesting. Just as the usual American restaurant in Scotts Bluff or Snoqualmie Falls ignores the simple maxim that if you want good business, you must serve good food, the usual public speaker disregards the simple principle that if you want good audience attention, you must be interesting.

How can a speaker be interesting?

Much of this book will be taken up with practical answers to just that question; but, first, let us say that a speaker must know and think about certain fundamental appeals which have irresistible attraction for most human beings. We have mentioned crime. Over twenty years ago, when coonskin coats and baggy plus fours began to shuffle about on the American campus and degenerate Sicilians in Chicago and New York began to make Americans painfully aware of the word "gangster," a double murder occurred in New Brunswick, New Jersey. This murder, with its attendant features, became known as the Hall-Mills case. The circumstances were not too unusual:

At a quarter past seven on the evening of September 14, 1922, Eleanor Mills, a comely young matron of New Brunswick, New Jersey, flounced gaily out of her modest flat, past her husband, who was cooling himself on the front steps. He observed her newest red polka-dot dress with mild surprise. "Where are you going?" he called. Her smile, as she turned to answer, mocked him. "Why don't you follow me and find out?" James Mills dully contemplated her trim figure until it disappeared into the corner drug store. A meek man, he had never been able to make much of the spirited creature he had married.

A few minutes later, the telephone rang in the palatial home of the Rev. Edward W. Hall. The rector was upstairs shaving; his wife was rocking herself on the front porch. Two servants, Louise Geist and Barbara Tough, were busy in the house. When the bell jangled again and again, Mrs. Hall went in to answer. As she placed the receiver to her ear, Dr. Hall's voice wafted over from the extension above. Did Mrs. Hall listen in on the conversation? She swore later that she did not, and the servants who glanced in and then went back to their work didn't know. In a short while, Dr. Hall hurried out "to attend some services at the church."

Neither Hall nor Mrs. Mills ever returned alive. At three o'clock on the following morning, William Philips, a night-watchman, saw a woman in a tan coat enter the side door of the Hall mansion. On the morning of the 16th, Raymond Schneider and his girl friend, Pearl Bahmer, decided to pick mushrooms. They selected as the likeliest place, De Russey's Lane, a lonely dirt road on the outskirts of New Brunswick, of local renown as a retreat for lovers.

Jutting off the lane at one point was a verdant plot, shielded from all but the most prying eyes by the low-reaching limbs of a dwarfed crab-apple tree. Schneider and Miss Bahmer had advanced to this point when they nearly stepped on the outstretched forms of a "sleeping" couple. Closer inspection, however, sent them out onto the main highway for help.

That it was murder there was no doubt; the course of the bullets and the character of the injuries settled it. . . .

For the newspapers, the case was a "natural." Hall was one of the wealthiest and most prominent clergymen in New Jersey; his wife's family, the Stevens', were among the first families of the state. Eleanor Mills was the choir leader in Hall's fashionable church. For a long time the affair between the rector and his pretty parishioner had been one of the choicest bits of scandal in the community. A horde of reporters soon descended upon the vicinity and made the crab-apple tree the news center of the world.

The ensuing confusion is hardly describable. . . .*

* J. L. Brown, "The Hall-Mills Mystery," *The American Mercury*, November, 1938. Copyright by The American Mercury, Inc., 1938.

Although the details of the Hall-Mills case followed the sordid pattern of a hundred other illicit love affairs, the ground-swell of publicity which swept the nation bordered on the miraculous. At least twelve million words, enough to fill 960 newspaper pages of solid reading matter, skittered smoking hot out of Somerville, New Jersey, to the roaring presses of newspapers. One New York paper had sixteen reporters prowling about the neighborhood of the crab-apple tree. Photographers buzzed so thickly in the tainted atmosphere that one fell through a skylight in the attempt to catch Mrs. Hall on the stand.

The nation-wide spectacle of millions of Americans snatching avidly at each fresh piece of evidence was disgraceful. It was shocking even in a period known for its ugly excesses. Who were the buyers of the newspapers? Were they solely the ill bred, the vulgar? Not at all! They were the leisure class of Scarsdale and Lake Forest as well as the mill hands of Murphy's Flats. At a recent dinner conversation, a university professor with a Harvard accent, a man who lectures on poetry and esthetics, confessed that he regularly bought several newspapers every evening during the Hall-Mills trial and devoured every word. In view of the almost universal furor of interest, often morbid, which arises in the wake of any notorious crime, it may be taken for granted, then, that the subject has immense attention value.

What can a person who wishes to give a public speech do with the matter of crime?

Let us consider a prosaic topic like "Railway Operation and Maintenance." This topic sounds dull. Even those professionally interested in the work might not be too intrigued. Could anything be done to make a talk on this subject attractive?

Since almost any fair-sized library has bound volumes of back numbers of magazines, we could go to one and dig around under the general topic of "Railways." Thumbing through the pages, we might come across the fascinating account of Indian Charlie's attempt to rob a Texas & Pacific mail train some years ago. Here

is an adventurous tale of crime thwarted by the prompt, intelligent action of the law. It is not sordid, and since it has to do with a railway and its operation, it would lead directly into our main subject matter.

Suppose then, that we give the audience a pleasant surprise, and instead of beginning our talk on "Railway Operation and Maintenance" with a lot of ponderous statements about "the increasingly complex difficulties due to the aftermath of war" and "certain disturbing phases of the labor situation," we open boldly with Indian Charlie climbing into an empty box car in the Fort Worth railway yards:

On the night of September 14th, several years ago, a huge gorilla-like man, who was known in the East Texas oil fields as Indian Charlie, climbed into an empty box car in the Texas & Pacific railway yards at Fort Worth. He listened for a moment, but satisfied that everything was all right, he settled down in the shadows in an alert, crouching position.

Back at the passenger station in town, the conductor on No. 11 took a final look at his watch. The engineer started the heavy train on its way. As the cars clattered down the main-line track, the combination mail and express coach approached the box car where Indian Charlie stood ready to jump. The instant the two cars were side by side, the big man leaped into the mail coach, gun in hand, and yelled for the express messenger to "Put 'em up!"

Backing the messenger against one side, Indian Charlie quickly tied him with a few deft jerks. Then he went for the mail sacks. He knew they carried \$100,000 in payroll money. According to a prearranged plan with two confederates, the payroll bandit kicked the valuable sacks out as the train passed a water tank two and one half miles from town. He then took a long knife and advanced to murder the helpless messenger. Fortunately, however, something happened.

Quickly, several packing cases at one end of the car opened. With guns out, special agents of the Division of Investigation, burst into view and challenged Indian Charlie to surrender. The bandit chose to shoot it out. He fell, mortally wounded, before

he could squeeze a trigger. At the water tank, one of his partners in the attempted robbery was shot. The other soon gave up. It so happened that the entire plan hatched by these three men was known by the Division of Investigation. Through prompt action and quick thinking, they saved the life of the express messenger and recovered safely a large sum of money.

The transition from this opening story to more pertinent aspects of our talk is not difficult. Indian Charlie gives us the tremendous advantage of grasping the attention of the audience immediately. Then, if we adhere to the principles of talking forcefully in concrete terms, painting vivid word pictures, selecting significant detail, all of which will be discussed and illustrated in the chapters to come, we can give a public talk with inevitable success.

"But," someone may say, "must we all be sensationalists? Must every talk open with the roar of gunfire, the thud of riddled bodies? Must our minds suffer constant pollution from association with dubious characters slinking through back alleys?"

The answer is emphatically No. Crime is only one of the powerful appeals for attention. There are many. *The world of nature offers infinite possibilities to crystallize public interest.* This is especially true if it offers something about animals. Few children and adults can resist the appeal of just such material as this:

The actions . . . of animals in captivity are often . . . misunderstood. When brown bears, for example, stand for hours just lifting one paw and then the other, they are merely following an age-old custom of padding down the snow. And it's not fleas that make the monkeys scour each other so intently, but a passion for salt which they remove bit by bit from scaly skin, plus an innate vanity for grooming. Actually, few monkeys have parasites. . . .

The fox deprived of its freedom to run may make you indignant; but a fox runs primarily to track food and escape danger: when well-fed and at peace, it does not stray from its lair. Elephants like to be chained; otherwise, lacking a feeling of security, they'd trumpet all night in fear. Understanding this, native keepers in India fashion a chain of straw for each of their charges rather

than make them pass the night fearing lest their food be stolen and their bed (a source of particular pride) be destroyed by the other elephants. . . .

To keep the penguins cool in hot weather requires 200 pounds of ice a day in their shelter, or electric refrigeration, so that the animals are in a veritable icebox behind a window. And when you see a hippopotamus with a baby, thank the zoo man for having built a large enough bath: the hippo breeds and gives birth under water—for security—while the baby nurses under water, going up for air and down for milk.

Lions bred in captivity are actually handsomer and more healthy than those in the jungle. Their size and coat are superior because they get better food; their color is unfaded by the tropical sun, and their mane is more luxuriant because it's not torn by underbrush. And they live to a riper age. It is an odd fact that most animal lovers never think of old age in the jungle. But for wild beasts there is no graceful autumn of life; there is only a ghastly, inescapable disintegration, or death from more alert enemies. It is this senile loss of power—and usually only this—which drives a lion to man-killing. In freedom a lion rarely lives more than 10 years. In captivity he lives to 25 and 30.*

The animal world provides unlimited items of interest for the speaker to use. The woodchuck, the antelope, the wolf—most wild creatures live colorful, amusing lives, and people are endlessly fascinated by stories about them. One reason may be that little is known about animals. Even the simple cart horse is a mysterious stranger to the man on the street. Each year one or more newspapers print a harrowing tale of some solitary wanderer of the Canadian northland pulled to his death by a pack of ferocious wolves. Yet wolves do not run in packs in the ordinary sense, and the archives of the Dominion Government at Ottawa show no verified instance of a wolf ever attacking a man.

Visitors in the national parks and forests shiver with delight

* Wilson Chamberlain, "Backstage at the Zoo," *Scientific American*, May, 1937, condensed under the title, "Zoos—More Humane Than You Think," in *The Reader's Digest*, May, 1937. Reprinted by permission of The Reader's Digest.

at the thought that outside their cabins, in the dark pines, may lurk the sinister mountain lion, assault and death in his eye. It would spoil their fun to know that *Felis concolor*, the marvelous lion of our western states, is curious but not at all homicidal.

The gentle-eyed doe is one of the few dangerous animals. Children love to feed her bread crusts and melon rinds, but often behind those melting eyes smolders the temper of a shrew. She has knife-sharp hooves and can kick and slash without a second's warning. Contrary to belief, the skunk is a good neighbor, a great devourer of obnoxious pests, and quite stingy with his scent if dogs are kept away. There is seldom any reason to kill him.

Few people know that bears eat butterflies and pansies. One speaker, in addressing a group of Kiwanis Club members on the subject of forest destruction in the Pacific Northwest, began his talk with these amazing facts about a bear's versatile appetite:

Have you ever seen a bear eat? The common black bear of our American woods is a fat Happy Hooligan with a comical eye and a stomach for adventure in food. He's quite a character around a swill barrel; that trap-like mouth of his will work through slop and potato peels, but don't think he's satisfied with that. He likes eggs for breakfast; and if a pig strolls near, he is likely to match them with bacon.

A bear is especially fond of watermelon. He eats them seeds and all. Then he may top off with a few fat mice. He is partial to sweet corn, either Golden Bantam or Country Gentleman, but in lieu of that he'll crunch an apple or a summer squash with the same debonair enjoyment.

Like most sporting gentlemen, a bear fancies poultry and up-land game. He'll snatch a fat hen or a partridge; then, when that course is finished, he'll corner a mess of ants. Strawberries, with or without cream, may serve for dessert. Or the choice could be dandelions with wild honey. In fact, dine with him at Joe's Beanery or the Waldorf-Astoria; he'll grunt through chili or chicken with the same preposterous gusto.

This talk continued for some minutes with additional material about bears: why they leave claw marks on certain trees, why

they enter that strange half-world of hibernation, why a brown bear is a blond in a brunette family. Once this speaker had his audience interested in bears—and it is surprisingly easy to get men interested in animals—it was a simple matter to switch from the topic of a forest dweller to the chief topic of forest destruction.

However, prospective speakers and beginners at the art may object. They may say: "We're not naturalists. We don't know anything about animals. How can we talk about them?"

You don't have to be a naturalist. In a few evenings' study at a library, you can learn accurate and quaint facts about any animal's life which will furnish excellent material for entertainment or illustration in a talk. Ernest Thompson Seton, Enos A. Mills, and other naturalists have filled many books with animal lore. Use it. Back issues of such magazines as *Collier's*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, the *American Mercury*, *Nature Magazine*, the *Reader's Digest*, and *Asia* are filled with splendid articles and stories from which you can get vivid material.

Another objection might be raised over the fact that most public talks do not deal directly or indirectly with outdoor subjects like forestry or conservation. The use of animal material might seem impossible or too irrelevant.

Not at all!

Is your subject "Chicago"? Good! Some authorities believe the word "Chicago" is a corruption of the Cree Indian word for skunk. Start your talk with stories or facts about the gentle creature with the bushy tail. If your delivery is half good, your audience will be interested in you and your talk immediately.

Are you to address a distinguished group on the subject of the Anaconda Copper Company? Excellent! Tell them about the badger, because it was a badger busily digging in his hole which caught the attention of a weary prospector and led to the Rio Tinto copper strike—millions of tons of ore—north of Elko, Nevada. Have you been asked to lecture on a social topic such as "marriage"? Why not adopt a unique beginning and tell briefly

of the domestic life of the sea otter, an almost extinct animal whose connubial life in the offshore kelp beds of the California coast was something of an idyl?

There are limitless opportunities to introduce animals into a talk. They can appear at the beginning or prowl into the main body of your material. Doing this lends a certain originality, and it may be managed without being either irrelevant or fantastic. Animals appear constantly in the most ordinary conversation. We say that a man has a "bull neck" or the "strength of an ox" or the "cold eyes of a wolf." We say that a woman has the "lithe grace of a panther" or the "placid meekness of a cow." We describe appetites and mention the pig. We speak of teeth and talk of a squirrel. We envy the financial magnate; he is a lion. The gangster is a rat. The shyster is a fox. The chiseler is a skunk. And so on.

Anything about a dog is especially good. Material such as this could be used to illustrate how even in the animal kingdom patience, research, and experiment can evolve a new and desired product:

In a district of England where fox, otter and badger were abundant, the necessity for keeping three kinds of dogs for these three kinds of hunting pained a certain sporting man. So, being practical, he got some of the best dogs available, chopped their legs shorter and spread them wider apart, hammered their skulls flatter, and named the quaint-looking result after his home town, Sealyham. Of course, instead of resorting to the cleaver and mallet, he achieved his desired end by cross-breeding. But the story demonstrates that dogs are really tailor-made—cut from a pre-determined pattern to fill a specific requirement.

Take the Airedale, for instance. When bull baiting was banned in Great Britain, dog fighting in a ring under rules came into popularity. Existing dogs didn't satisfy the quarrymen and mill hands of the Aire Valley so they set about manufacturing an animal that would give them Bigger and Better Fights. They started with a rough terrier common in that section, crossed him with the bull terrier and again crossed the offspring with the otter hound. The result was exactly what the breeders wanted:

fighting dogs with a vicious temper and a vile disposition. Tailored by amateurs, there was considerable variety in the Airedale's "cut" originally. He had hound ears; he came in all colors, some light, some all black; some had silky coats, some smooth. Later the professionals refined the breed: the impossible temper was eliminated, the coat standardized, the ears shortened, and the Airedale as we know him today was evolved.*

Even snakes are good. Snakes arouse repugnance in most people. However, each summer crowds of tourists throng the long hot roads from Grand Canyon points to the Hopi Indian villages to see ceremonial red men hold rattlesnakes in their teeth. Even smartly groomed women wait hours in the blazing Arizona sunlight for the hypnotic chant of the priests and the weird buzz of the bull-roarer to signal the appearance of the snakes. Reptiles have a strange, sinister fascination for those who profess to detest them.

Ask Nai Liam Manho.

Years ago at the Pasteur Institute in Bangkok, when Thailand was still Siam, a young chap by the name of Nai Liam Manho thrilled crowds of people each day with his peculiar and dangerous work. He was an attendant in the Snake Park maintained by the Institute for the manufacture of antivenin for snakebite. Each morning he strolled up casually, a cigarette between his lips, a pole with the forked iron end in his hands, to begin his daily round with the cobras, the vipers, the banded kraits, and the great hamadryad or king cobra.

When Liam entered the compound where the king cobra could stretch his eleven feet of fanged malice, men, women and children watched with excited interest. The king cobra is the only snake in the world which will attack a man at sight. It is said that it will even give chase. Rearing one-third of its horrid reptilian length from the ground, the king cobra travels at race-horse speed, strikes its victim high up on the face or neck, and injects a lethal charge of venom. The monster can kill even an elephant

* Paul W. Kearney, "Dogs Are Tailor Made," *Esquire*, March, 1934, condensed in *The Reader's Digest*, April, 1934. Reprinted by permission of *The Reader's Digest*.

and logging companies in the teak industry have lost valuable beasts to it.

However, the hamadryad attended by Liam was pretty well accustomed to the sight of people and its homicidal instincts were somewhat dormant. Liam would boldly grab it by the tail end to get it out of the way while he swept out the cement beehive which shielded the reptile from the intense sun glare. It would raise that terrible hood a bit—the danger signal—and Liam would step to one side, but the snake glided over to the water tank and swam gracefully and swiftly around.

More spectacular was his treatment of the banded kraits. Since these big black and yellow striped reptiles were inclined to be sluggish rather than aggressively alert like the cobras, Liam would often grab them deftly by the middle and put them into the water surrounding their compound. The kraits are a venomous snake, and in the Far East they have an uncomfortable penchant for turning up on the golf links or at the dinner table.

People always marveled at the casual manner displayed by Liam as he progressed from one enclosure to another to mingle at close range with his dreaded serpents. It was not that he was immune to the deadly onslaught of any of them or that he had not experienced their poisonous fangs. But the antivenin to counteract the bite of a cobra, a viper, or a banded krait was manufactured by the Institute and instant inoculation stood always ready. Nevertheless, Liam was wary.*

Describe a volcano. From time to time a tense political situation in the Balkans, in France, or elsewhere in the world has been described as a volcano. If you ever have occasion to mention this awesome phenomenon of nature to suggest some similar condition, why not tell your audience some amazing characteristics of volcanoes? The entire world was excited by accounts of the fabulous Mexican volcano, Paracutin, which sprouted up one day from a farmer's field. It burst upon the public mind like a visitation from the age of the dinosaurs. *Life* magazine devoted pages of color pictures to it.

* Facts taken from article by Edith E. Spaeth, "White Man's Snake Magic," *Asia*, December, 1926. Reprinted by permission.

Use the big trees. Magazine and newspaper advertisers often use the California big trees to attract attention and make favorable comparisons with their products. You can use them in the same way in a talk. Do you want to impress your audience with the immense vitality and longevity of something? Cite the General Sherman tree in the high Sierras and the Founder's Tree near Dyerville. Tell them something about these trees which is not generally known. Tell them that neither tree will ever die unless fire, earthquake, or some other form of physical violence crashes it to the ground. Tell them that it is reputedly believed that no Sequoia has ever died from "natural causes." They never sicken, never rot; their sap is poison to insects. Describe the fabulous monument hewn down in the summer of 1850 or 1851. The bark alone was two feet thick. It took six husky men twenty-six days to bring this mammoth to the ground. Any library will give you this material and more.

Were the rain gods angry? On a towering rock pinnacle which soars some three thousand feet along the south rim of the Grand Canyon in Arizona stand the desolate remains of an ancient Indian house. The dark-eyed men and women of many families must have pounded meal and offered incense cedar to the rain gods under the spacious roof. Children played and life was secure—for a while. An enormous fissure separated their ancient citadel from the limestone ridge of the south rim. Even now, if you drop a stone into this space once bridged by logs, a watch will tick many times before the impact at the bottom is heard.

The Indians who lived high on this cloud castle doubtless picked out the site for security. Their protection lay in walls and a drawbridge of logs. And yet, their enemies came. The rains may have failed. The crops may have withered. The gods, perhaps, were angry. Other red men, more ruthless, more clever, may have battered the fortress to submission. No one really knows. Nothing remains but the dusty rubble of the walls, some

pieces of colored pottery, and arrowheads scattered about on the floor.

There are thousands of such prehistoric ruins in the United States. Most of them represent a mystery. Why should this isolated ruin and many of the large ones like Mesa Verde in Colorado lie cold and untenanted for centuries? They were built at enormous cost in labor and skill. Where did the inhabitants go? What happened to them? Many theories exist and some are based on fact, but actually little is known.

Why not introduce one of these Indian ghost houses into your talk? They have sentimental and romantic appeal. Perhaps you will want to speak to an audience about the dangers of smugness and self-satisfaction. Describe one of these long-silent communities. It may be that these prehistoric Indians grew fat and overly complacent in their sky houses and cliff dwellings. Perhaps while they smiled, their enemies frowned. A day of reckoning came.

You might wish to talk to a group of business or technical men about the hazards of allowing machinery or mechanical processes to become obsolete. For a few minutes take them away from the hotel dining room and the roar of outside traffic. With words take them to some lonely mesa where the stolid Zufii gathers piñon nuts and lizards scamper in the sun-drenched ruins of an ancient village. Use this excursion as an example. These long-gone people had technical knowledge. They were engineers; they were architects, even city planners. It is possible that their calamity was a failure to advance. It is possible that in that far-off time their methods decayed while those of their competitors flourished. Perhaps they were early practitioners of "too little and too late." Whatever it was, new problems arose and obviously they failed to master them. Their story points a moral.

Shiva Temple incident drew world-wide attention. If any doubt lingers as to whether the public at large is interested in the natural features of the earth, the excitement aroused by a minor

exploration in the Grand Canyon a few years ago is indicative. Several naturalists thought it would be interesting and valuable to investigate the animal life existing on top of a massive rock formation in the Canyon known as Shiva Temple. Since access to the pine forest growing on top of this vast butte was difficult, they reasoned that certain wildlife forms, such as squirrels, chipmunks, and other small animals, probably had been isolated there for untold periods of time. They were interested in finding out whether or not the processes of evolution and adaptation had produced animals different in color, structure, and habits from those which mooched food from the tourists. The latter animals were a few miles away, but they were separated by thousands of feet of chasm.

Accordingly, they planned a small expedition. It was all very quiet; there was nothing pretentious in their plans or expectations—that is, until the newspapers got wind of it. Immediately reporters all over the country sensed great story possibilities. Wires began to hum, telegraph keys clicked, and Shiva Temple, a Grand Canyon geological curiosity, was hurtled dramatically into the news. Millions of Americans began to read and speculate upon exciting tales of what might be found. Here, according to some reporters, might be found the elusive “missing link” which has disturbed evolutionists for decades. In the fertile minds of other reporters, the hefty Brontosaurus or the terrible Triceratops of the Age of Dinosaurs might be slithering their reptilian ways atop the Temple. The reporters, intoxicated with their stories, never explained how tons of voluminous fodder for such gigantic beasts were to be grown on those few acres and in northern Arizona’s sparse rainfall.

Other eager newsmen called for expert mountain climbers to scale the towering heights of Shiva and transport planes to drop supplies for the scientists. It was all very exciting to the country and embarrassing to the original investigators. The climax of all curiosity came when the sober London *Times* called on the transatlantic telephone for a story of the marvelous discoveries.

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The international furore of interest over Shiva Temple was a tempest in a teapot. It was created solely by the aggressive imaginations of the newspapers. Their readers were intensely interested in natural phenomena, and they knew it. The torrent of trumped-up, fanciful tales was regrettable, but the entire incident once again demonstrated the public's interest in the curious world of nature. This is something for the speaker to remember.

CONCLUSION

The invasion of North Africa in the late war did not start on the beaches of Oran and Casa Blanca. The invasion started in Washington, in London, in the minds of the men who planned it. The venture was successful largely because every possible obstacle was anticipated and one or more defenses made ready. Months before the allied armada dropped anchor in the uneasy waters of the Mediterranean, men were at work secretly to determine the temper of the people of Morocco, of Algiers, of Tunis. Other men studied the nature of the beaches, the tides, the likelihood of rough and dangerous waters. Others ferreted the story of gun emplacements, of troops, of supplies. Hundreds of such details were sought out and furnished to the allied high command. These were studied, evaluated, and used. When the first Americans and Britishers hit the beaches, they knew pretty well what to expect. Victory was not left to haphazard fortune. It was meticulously planned for and achieved.

It would be foolishly grandiose to compare a public talk with an immense military operation like the allied landing in North Africa. However, there is this modest similarity; a talk also must be carefully planned. Rarely do successful talks just happen. They are premeditated and set out beforehand in the mind of the speaker with one end in view—success. For instance, the shrewd public speaker will try to learn something about his prospective audience. He will try to determine whether they are to be bobby-soxers, middle-aged Rotarians, or gray-haired oldsters dreaming

of a white cottage in Pasadena. He wants to know whether they can frequent the Bath and Tennis Club in Palm Beach or must grumble through the winter at Thief River Falls, Minnesota. He will try to learn whether most of them lie in bed on Sunday morning or listen to Dr. Edward W. Benton at the First Methodist Episcopal Church. Such things are important. They have much to do with people's attitudes and receptivity.

Receptivity in an audience often means applause. Consequently, a speaker who wishes to create that pleasant sound should also know something about an audience's education. It would help to know whether they voted for Mr. Roosevelt or Mr. Dewey. It would be of additional value to know what these people do in their spare time. Then, of course, there is the preparation of the talk itself. Naturally, this is influenced by a consideration of the details just mentioned.

Unceasingly the speaker must ask himself: What are people interested in? What do they want to hear about? Human beings in Kobe, Johannesburg, or Hoboken are interested in crime, nature, money, success, people, love, adventure, conflict, and other fundamentals. They're interested in strange happenings, in tales of the supernatural, in almost anything that is unusual. They like excitement and drama and action. They like things that are vivid, picturesque. They like new things and old things presented in a new way. They like stories, and the "once upon a time" of their childhood will, with allowances for particular audiences, hold their interest indefinitely.

Consequently, since a speaker is in business to get attention, he must work to present the serious matter of his talk within a framework of one or more of the attention fundamentals. Where will he get this framework? He will get it from the subject matter of his talk.

Not long after Carleton College was founded at Northfield, Minnesota, in 1866, Jesse James and a mounted band of armed thugs rode into the town. They robbed the First National Bank

and shot to death the treasurer of the college, who would not surrender school money entrusted to him. Here is a framework of crime where one would least expect it. Moreover, it's an exciting story, and fitted with details it would make an excellent beginning for a talk on Midwest liberal-arts colleges and the kind of men who founded them.

One could eulogize this heroic treasurer in terms of his integrity, his honesty, his courage and never particularly interest people. But tell them he was shot by Jesse James! Better still, dramatize the entire incident. Make the people in front of you see that band of hard-bitten men, with old-fashioned Colt revolvers strapped to their hips, riding arrogantly into the town. Make them hear the clatter of galloping hoofs, the strain of saddle leather. Startle them with the demand for money, the sound of the fatal shot. With this brief incident as an introduction, you can tell them many things about the men behind Carleton and Knox and Grinnell, because this is part of what people invariably like. They'll listen very attentively.

In preparing a talk, look for the fundamentals in your material. Crime incidents are not always present. They're not always desirable. You can't always find something about a pussy willow or a crack in the limestone left by an earthquake. But there may be a love story. There may be a tale of fabulous wealth or something of mystery. Anything that has people connected with it is sure to have battle, adventure, conflict. Dig it out.

While it is axiomatic that the important material of a talk must be made attractive through a framework of general appeal like crime and the world of nature, this fundamental appeal must be tempered for particular audiences. For instance, everyone is interested in love. It fills the newspapers and confession journals with millions of words a year. A talk at the Highland Park Women's Club could very well include advice, humorous or otherwise, on that obsession of the women's magazines—how to hold a husband. It would fascinate the young matrons. But the

same talk would be downright cruelty at the Julia Marsden Home for Elderly Females. Most human beings are interested in money. It certainly has a fundamental appeal; yet a talk interlarded with the profit experiences of very small businessmen would hardly beguile the associates of J. P. Morgan & Co.

In this chapter, two of the fundamental appeals for attention have been discussed and illustrated. The first few pages of each of the following chapters will be devoted to a discussion and illustration of one or more of other attention fundamentals. In addition, each of the following chapters will discuss other aspects involved in giving a public talk.

From the standpoint of subject matter, a successful talk need not be difficult. A few evenings at a library, some pages of notes, some ideas of one's own, and a moderate ability to put things together will start anyone on the road toward original and effective public speaking.

CHAPTER 2

☛ In a love affair or a speech, a lot of preliminary only wastes time and bores people

(How to have a smash beginning for your talk)

TUCKED away in the imagination of everyone is a golden land of magnificence and fabulous wealth. It may lie at the end of the rainbow or beyond the Northwest Passage to the Indies. It may be a land of castles or a sun-drenched island alone in a coral sea. Treasure abounds there and the most ordinary man can amass a fortune in precious metal. So goes this human dream.

The dream came close to reality once. The first of the Argonauts who pushed eagerly into the pine-clad foothills of California's Sierra Nevada found gold in dazzling abundance. It glittered in the sandbars of rivers; it sparkled in the gnarled roots of trees. It lay strewn on the bedrock of canyons and big flakes of it shimmered in the grass roots of the hills. Millions were there for the taking.

At Downieville, where the bars of the Yuba River lay heavy with gold, a single day's work yielded \$5,000 in nuggets and dust. At Georgetown, one pan of stream gravel showed \$2,000 in coarse gold grains; and at Red Hill, another mining camp, a thin streak of decomposed quartz paid its owner a quarter of a million in heavy yellow metal.

Nothing like this ever happened before. The men who swarmed into the Sierra foothills were not the hired agents of a king; they were not professional adventurers like Pizarro or Cortes. They were plain, everyday Americans from farms and small

towns, who left the plough and the account book to get rich in the far west's Golconda.

With a lusty roar they burst into Coloma and Hangtown, spread like locusts into the rich placers, swaggered in the streets of San Francisco when their pouches were heavy with gold. Stomping into the Wells, Fargo office in the little town of Columbia, they weighted the scales with dust worth fifty-five millions. Even Bret Harte's tiny Poker Flat in one month furnished \$700,000 worth of bullion. At Kanaka Creek they disgorged lumps weighing as much as thirty pounds. The great nugget of Sierra City, the Monumental, weighed 141.

Fortunetellers say that human beings are interested in money and love in about equal proportions. Most appeals for prophecy concern these two fascinating subjects. Assuredly money is a fundamental appeal for attention because it is difficult to conceive of anyone seriously indifferent to the magic of that word. The student of Egyptian antiquities, with his scarabs and his perpetual abstraction, may disclaim any mercenary ambition, yet money would take him to the British Museum, finance a trip to Egypt and the Valley of the Kings. The research worker delving in the realm of pure science may think of himself as wholly removed from the influence of financial traffic, but it required two billion dollars of somebody's money to underwrite the atomic bomb. Even the grinning hobo astride a railroad box car is dependent upon society's money to sustain his carefree existence. He has to eat.

Consequently, people are inevitably interested in money and financial success. This does not mean that audiences are likely to be made up of persons whose consuming passion is the acquisition of wealth. Few individuals devote their lives to that futile project. But money even to those not engaged primarily in the pursuit of it often seems like the answer to many of their difficulties. It has a siren song, and the success story, especially to Americans, weaves a powerful spell:

Walter Percy Chrysler grew up in the little prairie town of Ellis, Kansas, where people still ate buffalo meat and talked in muffled tones of Custer's tragedy on the Little Big Horn. His family was a thrifty one of German descent who lived in a small frame house near the Union Pacific railway tracks. The father, "Hank" Chrysler, was a locomotive engineer on one of the old wood burners. His mother was the indomitable type of pioneer woman who cooked strapping meals for the family of five, made most of the clothes, and barbered her husband in the kitchen of the neat little house. Also she regularly flailed her offspring with a hairbrush. Hers was not the philosophy of excuse for chores undone.

Young Walter, after an early career as milk peddler and post-card salesman, took up regular work as a sweeper in the local railway shops. For ten cents an hour, ten hours a day, he struggled to push a broom over floors jagged with splinters and thick with dirty engine grease. Later, as apprentice, he worked for five cents an hour, learning to set locomotive valves so that the big iron horses would snort in rhythmical cadence. At twenty-three, as experienced journeyman mechanic, he could set valves to make the experts whistle. Also, he could play on the tuba.

With a total capital of \$60, Walter Chrysler plunged into married life at Salt Lake City, Utah. There he worked as a round-house mechanic for \$3 a day, repaired blown cylinder heads faster than any other man could do it, and took correspondence courses in engineering at night. He had an insatiable thirst to find out what made things run and how they could run better with less effort and cost. Before many years had passed, this driving ambition for mechanics had elevated him to Superintendent of Motive Power for the Chicago Great Western Railroad at Oelwein, Iowa.

While in Chicago in 1908, Chrysler saw a Locomobile touring car upholstered in red leather. The price was \$5,000 cash. Seven hundred was every cent he had. Borrowing the rest from railroad friends, who thought him mad, he shipped the gorgeous chariot to his home in Oelwein and started his career in motors. For weeks on end, Walter Chrysler took apart and studied minutely every detail of this automobile. He read catalogues and studied automotive designs. His dreams, which heretofore had been on superlocomotives which could pull heavier loads at

faster speeds, now began to include this new wonder of the age—the automobile.

Later, when he was Works Manager of the American Locomotive Company, Detroit became interested in this aggressive man with an outstanding flair for mechanics. They offered him \$6,000 a year at the Buick Motor Company, a large figure in the infant automotive industry. This was half of what he received at American Locomotive, but Walter Chrysler accepted. Three years later he demanded and got \$25,000 a year, and one year after that he set his price at \$50,000. In 1916, when Walter Chrysler was forty-one years of age, Billy Durant of General Motors offered him a half million a year to remain as head of Buick. The five-cents-an-hour railroad grease monkey had arrived!

When the Willys-Overland Company was veering dangerously toward catastrophe and the bankers saw a loss of fifty million ahead they called for Walter Chrysler. His salary to pull them out? One million dollars a year! Then Walter Chrysler took hold of the tottering Maxwell Motor Company and brought out the real ambition of his life—the Chrysler automobile! Banned from the New York Automobile Show of 1924 by a technicality, he again showed his split-second resourcefulness by engaging the lobby of the Hotel Commodore to display his fabulous new car. It proved to be the hit of the season.

In due time Chrysler Motors became one of the automotive Big Three and absorbed the Dodge Corporation in a monster deal involving \$60,000,000. In New York City, a seventy-seven-story building finally towered upward to commemorate another American who began life in a small town under the most modest circumstances and rose to an international position in motors and finance.

Here, then, is another leaf for the public speaker's notebook: People are interested in money. It is another of the fundamental appeals for attention. The story of financial success quickens the pulse rate of both men and women, and it can be introduced effectively in almost any kind of public talk. It is always good to begin with a success story.

Back in the week of September 3, 1938, the *Saturday Evening Post* published an article entitled "The Third Party Gets a Rich

Uncle," by Jack Alexander. The article dealt with certain phases of the political situation as it existed at that time in Minnesota. The central character of Mr. Alexander's discussion was Charles Allen Ward of St. Paul:

A husky, heavy-jawed young convict lay brooding on an upper-deck bunk in Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary one January evening in 1921. He was a newcomer and something of an iconoclast, and he had declined an invitation to join his three cell mates who were sprawled across a lower-deck cot playing dominoes. The new man's name was Charles Allen Ward. He had been convicted of narcotics possession by a Denver jury and sentenced to ten years. "A man beneath contempt," was the way the judge had described him.

As he gazed at the ceiling of his cubicle, Ward's thoughts were more upon the judge's stinging words than upon the years of imprisonment that lay ahead. Proud, dynamic and egoistic, he felt that he had been convicted on perjured testimony and cruelly smeared. He had been in prison a week and his resentment had already led him to look about for a way to escape, but a cautious study of the sentry system had convinced him that he would be killed if he made a break. Besides, he had decided, even if he should succeed, he would always be a man with a price on his head. On this cold night Charles Allen Ward was resolving to alter his way of living so that no contemptuous finger could be pointed his way again. Such a complete about-face was possible for him because his will was strong and he had an overpowering craving to be thought well of by others. During his life as a knock-about adventurer this desire had never been quite satisfied. He had been a barroom handy man in Alaska gold towns, a mate on a Pacific freighter, a miner at Tonopah, a tinhorn El Paso gambler, and a civilian quartermaster for Pancho Villa in the Mexican uprising. While in his twenties, he had rolled up a small fortune of \$70,000 and had lost it trying to look like a big-shot in the eyes of the only associates he knew. Now thirty-four, he determined to create a record of good behavior in prison, in order to win a parole when his minimum one-third term was served. Something meanwhile would have to turn up to give him a new start after leaving the penitentiary.

That something turned up toward the end of his term in the person of Herbert Huse Bigelow, a St. Paul multimillionaire, who was sent to Leavenworth for income-tax evasion. The roustabout and the man of wealth struck up a prison friendship and when they were both released, in 1924, Ward went to work in the factory of Brown & Bigelow, makers of calendars and other advertising novelties. . . .

Today Ward's income from all sources is \$400,000 a year and he is worth about \$5,000,000. . . . Ward lives on a 2000-acre farm he owns in Hudson, Wisconsin, some twenty-five miles from St. Paul. He also maintains an apartment in the St. Paul Athletic Club and has a couple of hunting lodges in the wilds of Northern Minnesota. President Roosevelt . . . restored his civil rights in recognition of the "exemplary life" he has led since leaving prison.*

Statistics on just how many people read this article in its entirety are not available, but it is safe to say that the number was large. And this number included many who were not interested in Minnesota politics. Why?

In the first place, almost anyone is interested in a man who has been a convict. Second, everyone enjoys the prospect of a man with enough pluck and determination to change a not too creditable way of life. The third reason is that Charles Allen Ward in a short period of years gathered \$5,000,000.

The same success story which attracted readers for this magazine article could have been well used to begin a talk on the same subject. In fact, with some audiences it could have been used almost verbatim. For others, it would have required simplification and rearrangement of material. This, of course, would have depended again on the type of audience—their educational background, occupational background, prejudices, age, sex, religion, and other features.

As important as anything to be considered in a book on speech fundamentals is the matter of how to begin a talk. The beginning

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must be vital. It should stir immediate favorable response. It should awaken and sometimes shock people out of that initial apathy which frequently infects an audience. Confidence and interest in the speaker are paramount, and a good beginning can entice these shy attitudes.

Too often the beginning of a speech is vague. The speaker wastes time and effect with abstract words and meaningless generalities. He bores people because he has neglected the attention fundamentals. Here is a typical beginning for a talk on "Social Problems of Modern Youth":

In a world devastated by two major wars within a quarter century, it becomes increasingly evident that young people of today face a grave situation. They find themselves called upon to deal with problems which they have not created. They must fit themselves into a society threatened with serious cleavages in established patterns of conduct. In this society where religious orthodoxy has been shaken and a soaring divorce rate betokens the uneasy estate of the home, they must evolve for themselves standards of social behavior. And yet—by what precepts are they to be guided?

This beginning is not good. It is not effective. It will not interest an audience!

The speaker is too abstract. He deals in nothing but generalities. He says that "young people . . . face a grave situation." What is a "grave situation"? To a young child it may be the loss of his marble down a rathole. To a high-school girl it may be a Coca-Cola stain on her new formal gown. To a bank president it may be the approach of the bank examiners. There are thousands of "grave situations." Consequently, the phrase as it stands means nothing.

Then the speaker talks about "a society threatened with serious cleavages in established patterns of conduct." What are "cleavages"? To the average person a cleavage is a separation or split. However, can he visualize society in some kind of separation or

split? What is "society"? Well, society means people, but what people? Oil millionaires from San Antonio, Texas, or shanty-boatmen from the banks of the Wabash? What are "established patterns of conduct"? "SPITTING IS FORBIDDEN BY LAW" and "GENTLEMEN WILL WEAR COATS IN THE DINING ROOM"?

That entire group of words is so bound up with inevitable questions in anyone's mind that its value in a talk is worthless. It paints no pictures, gives no one any immediate or clear idea of what is meant. Fundamentally it is extremely uninteresting.

"Religious orthodoxy has been shaken." What does that mean? Not going to confession? Playing golf on Sunday morning? Rejecting the tenets of John Calvin? Not believing in Adam and Eve?

Practically every line of this beginning can be analyzed and questioned in similar fashion. The result is only confusion. There is nothing tangible for anyone to see, to hear, to evaluate. It is like a big store window filled with drab colors and shopworn goods.

In contrast, let's try another kind of beginning for the same talk, "Social Problems of Modern Youth." We know that audiences like definite things. They like specific instances. Consequently, instead of beginning with some vague allusion to "problems," let's pick out one actual incident. This will immediately interest people and at the same time show by illustration that certain aspects of our social structure are awry:

One morning last month as the Southern Pacific's Portland train was approaching the outer suburbs of Los Angeles, a well dressed, beautiful girl of twenty-one stood fastening the clasps on her expensive hand luggage. Her companion in the Pullman compartment, a man somewhat older than she, was dashing off a hurried note to his wife in Cleveland, Ohio. The two had met in the lounge on the previous day; and after a pleasant interlude of talk, they retired to the club car for refreshment. Over a whisky and soda the girl learned that he was married and had two children. She told him of her family and of her elaborate schooling

just finished. There were more drinks, followed by dinner, and the hastily struck-up friendship seemed so attractive that the girl invited this man to her compartment for the night.

Now we have something to make almost any group of people curious and attentive. Here is a concrete illustration of the fact that moral values among some young people of the upper middle and wealthy classes have deteriorated. This beginning has a scandalous flavor, it is true, but many talks on social problems do involve scandal. This girl is not necessarily a moral derelict, but we know from this opening story that her sense of discrimination is unhappily lax. With this beginning we can easily progress to a discussion of the talk's real purpose and to additional illustrations.

Dull and ineffectual beginnings seem peculiarly characteristic of talks about the nation. The usual speech about any phase of United States politics, economics, or history begins with the deadly vagueness of a commencement address. The audience listens, sighs, and resigns itself to boredom. The beginning of this talk, given shortly after the Second World War, is an example:

There is today a growing tendency among Americans to shirk their obligations. Wherever we look, whether abroad or at home, this alarming flourish of irresponsibility is all too evident. From a world disorganized and chaotic from the fierce ravage of war, we call our troops home. From nations starving and dangerously undernourished, we withdraw food and support. From allies seriously in need of political stability, we remove the example of national sobriety and wrangle in the disgrace of strikes. In the face of our own threatened inflation, we patronize black markets and applaud a reduction of the income tax. With a monumental national debt, we yawn over prophetic statistics and spend more billions on gewgaws and cheap entertainment.

Again, this kind of beginning is too general. It will not strike sparks in the mind of an audience. It contains nothing vivid, nothing they can really see or feel. It is stale and conventional.

Let's take the sentence "From a world disorganized and chaotic from the fierce ravage of war, we call our troops home,"

and express that same idea in concrete language that people can really understand:

I stood on the pier at Hoboken last week and watched long lines of khaki-clad infantrymen tramp down the gangplank of the army transport *Caleb Cushing*. These men, most of whom were hardly more than boys, were returning after three long years overseas. They came swinging down the pier with a roar of enthusiasm that was wonderful to hear. Unconsciously, I thought to myself, Gosh, it's good to have them home! Later I met one walking with his mother. As they passed me, the mother turned and said, "Isn't it wonderful to have my boy back home?"

That night I read in the paper that Franz Mueller, a baker, a man who had been tortured and half killed for his resistance to the Nazis, had been beaten and slain by street hoodlums in his native town in Germany. He was carrying a sack with a few potatoes and two cabbages when the robbers approached. He screamed for help, but none was available. When the United States Military Police arrived, it was too late. They were too scattered; there were too few of them. The soldiers who should have been there to help this man were marching off a troopship at Hoboken, New Jersey. And so we lost a friend—a man who had trusted us.

And so we lose other friends—hundreds, thousands of them—men and women who had faith that the United States of America would fulfill its obligations and see things through.

And then I asked myself: "Is it such a good thing to have the boys back home?"

Audiences like stories, drama, action. Many speakers fail at the very start of their talk because they disregard this significant fact. Each one of the sentences in the beginning under consideration could be dramatized and made vivid simply by introducing actual people and situations. Instead of talking about nations starving, tell the story of a little Polish boy collapsing from hunger on the streets of Warsaw. That means something. An audience can see it and understand. Instead of vaguely mentioning that some of our allies need political stability, dramatize a fist fight or a pistol duel between a French Conservative and a Communist. All the

situations in the world are filled with elements of vital interest to people if only a speaker will look for and utilize them.

It is true, of course, that a speaker could hardly express concretely every sentence in this beginning of a talk about American irresponsibility and still have a beginning. He would have an entire talk. However, it might be well to start with a concrete expression of one of those sentences and then work into the other ideas and their illustrations later.

One can often begin a talk of this type with a story which illustrates what should be done in contrast to what is being done. Since the conventional beginning includes something about our terrific national debt and the disinclination to pay it, we could replace this beginning with a story from the life of Abraham Lincoln. The moral would be pretty self-evident:

Over one hundred years ago, in the little Illinois prairie settlement of New Salem, a man could buy a week's board and lodging for a single dollar. It was good food, too, and a comfortable room. That was when Abraham Lincoln lived there and was a bankrupt at the age of twenty-four. Abe had failed as a merchant, and his own carelessness and his partner's drunkenness had strapped him with a debt of \$1,100. This was a staggering figure in a community where a man was sometimes paid for his work in deerskins. It depressed young Lincoln mightily.

Yet, what did he do about it? What did the man whom Americans look upon as a symbol of the dignity and rugged strength of their kind of nation do to meet this huge obligation? There was an easy way out. It was the custom on the frontier for heavily burdened debtors simply to leave town, to clear out—usually on a dark rainy night. Lincoln could have done the same. His choice, however, was quite different. He settled down grimly among the men who had lent him money and determined to work until all of it was paid. Fifteen years later, Abraham Lincoln, member of Congress, was still sending home money to apply on the debt. He paid, of course, every cent.

To the inexperienced person, a public talk seems a fearsome project. He thinks of the audience as a thousand-eyed monster

with shark teeth and a perpetual sneer. He is terribly afraid they will laugh and perhaps speak of him with derision when the awful ordeal is over. He falters and chokes up at the thought of being the center of unfriendly attention.

The truth is that audiences are not disposed that way. It might be much better if they were. The standard of public speaking would rise. Audiences are patient, gentle, and infinitely long-suffering. They have a pathetic hope that the speaker and the speech will be good. This is indeed the triumph of faith over experience!

Most audiences are not violent and they do not laugh at the man on the platform. They are sympathetic and eager that he be a success.

In view of this, the speaker's task need not be an ordeal at all but an extremely pleasant experience. However, he must remember to include certain indispensables. One of these is a good beginning.

In speech, as in love and war, there is nothing like surprise. The speaker should not permit the audience even to wonder if he is going to be good. At once, without preliminary, he should *be* good!

When Thomas E. Dewey was special prosecutor of New York in 1937, he began a radio talk entitled "The ABC of Racketeering" in this blunt vigorous fashion:

Tonight I am going to talk about murder—murder in the bakery racket. I am also going to talk about an attempted murder.

Day before yesterday afternoon, on a New York City street, Max Rubin, an important witness in my investigation, was shot in the back. The bullet struck his neck, passed through his head, narrowly missing his brain. Tonight he still lies between life and death in a hospital. Upon the fragile thread of his life hangs evidence of the utmost importance to the people.

For two years now I have been prosecuting rackets. Every chieftain of the underworld, who has been indicted by my office, is in jail or is a fugitive from justice. The criminal underworld

is afraid for the first time in twenty years. It has gone into hiding, waiting for the fight against organized crime to blow over.

Today I have become a candidate for District-Attorney of New York County to see that trouble for the underworld does not blow over. I intend to see that the grip of the underworld is broken in the next four years.*

There is nothing vague or confusing in this introduction. It wastes no time getting immediately to the point. Mr. Dewey did not dilate at length upon "the ominous activities of the forces of organized crime" and all that sort of thing. Like a shot from a gun came his opening sentence saying that he would talk about murder and attempted murder. It was followed instantly by a vivid example of exactly that.

H. W. Prentis, Jr., president of the Armstrong Cork Company of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, was asked to give a talk with a novel twist entitled "If I Were a Labor Leader." He began by saying:

I stand before you this afternoon in almost as great confusion of mind as the Vermont farmer who was asked why he was walking along the road with a piece of rope in his hand. "I don't know," he replied. "I've either found a rope or lost a horse!" My mental condition is somewhat similar; for never before have I addressed the Congress of American Industry in any other capacity than as a manufacturer.

Confusion is a difficult thing to depict, but certainly every listener at this talk had some immediate conception of what was going on in Mr. Prentis's mind. Furthermore, this kind of beginning is somewhat humorous and the right kind of humor is always valuable.

For most public speakers, business and politics seem to be the favored subjects. Education, religion, and social problems follow. Any one of these vast fields offers infinite possibilities to the imaginative, resourceful person who wants to open his talk with punch.

* *Vital Speeches*, October, 1937.

Business means people, processes, and materials. Any business, whether it is the titanic United States Steel Corporation or Tomaso's Peanut Wagon in Kokomo, has people connected with it. And all people are of infinite interest to all other people.

Fortune Magazine, one of the fabulous triad of *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune*, consistently uses people to attract attention to its articles on American business. Here, for example, is a typical and effective beginning for an article on the Continental Oil Company:

Until the summer of 1928, when he was invited to 23 Wall Street for lunch, Dan Moran had not given much thought to the firm of J. P. Morgan & Co. Born at Cygnet, Ohio, he had picked up cash as an office boy and as a telegraph operator, earned his way through the University of Dayton, and then had gone south. To Tulsa, where he saw the oil spout from the Glenn Pool strike, then to Port Arthur, where he signed up as an engineer for the Texas Co. From there he was sent down to Panama and to South America, and from South America he had trekked north again into Mexico and to the States. By the summer of '28 he had done a number of things that are not common practice in Manhattan or on Long Island. He had got good work out of a crew of jail-birds and peons at Tampico. He had spent seventeen days in a hurricane on an oil barge. He had helped repair the ravages of another hurricane . . . had built refineries, drilled for oil, and . . . in the process he had learned something of men and something of the sweet-smelling stuff called crude.*

The editors of *Fortune* could have started this article with sweeping generalizations about Continental. It's a big company. They could have used the stock language of a thousand beginnings and written about the Continental Oil Company's "important position in the gigantic and complicated petroleum industry." They could have started with material about "the hundreds of miles of pipelines, the vast forests of oil derricks spreading out into many states of the Union, the thousands of men at work in the oil fields and refineries."

* Reprinted from the June, 1939, issue of *Fortune* by special permission of the Editors.

Why didn't they?

Because concrete material about one man associated with the Continental Oil Company is more interesting. It makes a far more arresting beginning. It will attract more people. It's more fun to read.

It would be more fun to listen to, also.

One may disagree with the articles in *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune*, one may disagree with the editorial policies and statements in these magazines; but the editors and their staffs do attract the attention of millions of people. How do they do it?

One obvious way is their personalizing of business and industry. Not only do they begin many of their articles with success stories or human-interest stories about men at the top—tycoons and millionaires and presidents, but they also utilize any and all people who are connected with a particular business or industry.

In writing of the Island Creek Coal Company of Huntington, West Virginia, *Fortune* introduced three of the office help as well as Mr. James Draper Francis, the president:

As you enter a plain waiting room the girl at the switchboard, putting aside her sewing, bids you in a nice southern way to make yourself to home. Past the waiting room runs a corridor, opening monotonously into a succession of small offices furnished with well-worn walnut desks and chairs and occupied by quiet and untroubled men. After the click and chrome of most big-business establishments, the atmosphere seems odd; especially when the hoot of a C. & O. train pulling into Huntington station strikes through the jerky monologue of a typewriter in a back room somewhere. However, by that time you have probably met Island Creek's President, and everything seems as meet and right as an antimacassar in a Victorian parlor. In an office so severe that an advertising-account executive might liken it to a Siberian outpost, Mr. James Draper Francis works with utter satisfaction. He is an elder in the Presbyterian Church, a nonsmoker and teetotaler, and definitely not one for front.

"We are plain people at Island Creek," Mr. Francis explains. One glance at his own amanuenses, "Senator" and "Mother" Hart,

who sit in facing offices outside the presidential chamber, proves that. The "Senator," who takes Mr. Francis' dictation, is a wag-gish fellow, all dried up, with a rolling sardonic eye and dandruff on his collar. "Mother," who transcribes the notes, is the other way around. She is plump and wise, seldom without a cache of titbits handy in the top drawer and a quick glance across the hall to see whether her husband disapproves.*

Since business always means people, the speaker on commercial subjects has a ready store of infallible material. The men and women who sew shirts or stuff sausages or invest millions can be used to advantage in the opening of any talk.

Processes, too, are interesting grist for the speaker's mill. Whether it is the cyanide process for the extraction of gold or the Steenbock process for the creation of vitamin D, there is usually something for the speaker to use in his beginning. Often there are unusual sidelights which make good telling. One Chicago manufacturer of chewing gum takes great pains not to use animal fat in greasing his chicle pans. Why? Orthodox Jews would not buy his gum. A manufacturer of fuel pumps in Cleveland has an electric-eye device installed in the top of a high chimney. Then, when the smoke becomes too black and dense, a bell sounds in the engine room. The immediate neighborhood is not unnecessarily darkened with soot.

The materials of commerce are a speaker's treasure house. Let's consider soap. It's prosaic, everyday stuff. Soap factories usually smell to high heaven with their great storage piles of half-rotten fat to be rendered. What romance is there in a speech beginning with something about the raw materials of soap?

Well, the soapmakers also use palm oil, much of which comes from the East Indian island of Sumatra. That's a strange word, "Sumatra." What does it suggest? Tigers and spice and the grim orangutan; monkeys and water buffaloes; native Bataks with filed teeth; Malay headmen with golden buttons and brilliant

* Reprinted from the March, 1938, issue of *Fortune* by special permission of the Editors.

sashes; sinister mangrove swamps, coconuts, and jungle warriors who ate their dead. Romance in soap? Plenty!

Any one of these topics would furnish quaint, interesting, or dramatic material for the beginning of a talk on the soap business. "Jungle warriors who ate their dead!" Something about that in the opening paragraphs would seem sufficiently vivid to dispel yawns and daydreams. Suppose then, we begin a talk on the soap business with compelling details about the gruesome practice of ceremonial cannibalism. Back numbers of the *National Geographic*, *Travel*, *Asia*, and other magazines would provide adequate information:

Years ago, when an aging warrior of the Batak tribes of Sumatra found his powers on the wane, he passed into a strange kind of immortality. Calling his relatives to him, the old man would climb into a tree while the family danced and chanted below. Presently the elder would drop to the ground like an over-ripe fruit. The moment he struck, some young stalwart would hit him on the head with a club. This courtesy over, grandpa was appreciatively eaten.

At this funereal repast, everyone was happy. The young men by dishing up a slice of their progenitor—garnished with lemon, it was said—partook of his wisdom and craft. The deceased died content in the assuring knowledge that he would find new life in the strong young bodies of the tribe. It was neat, efficient, gruesome!

Now, where would all of this lead? That would depend on what the speaker wanted to say. He might like to continue his talk with a comparison between this exotic ceremony and certain business practices in the soap trade. He might like to point out the complex background of a bar of soap and the amazing people who helped to make it. He might want to talk for a while on the history of soap manufacture and illustrate some detail through these opening paragraphs.

This is the sort of thing that is engaged in constantly by magazine and newspaper advertisers. They look for an interesting story

or fact in the background of their product. Then they present a picture which they know will draw attention. In the copy of the advertisement, they try to make the transition—show the connection between this picture, which at first may seem highly irrelevant, and the nature and quality of their product.

Speakers, like advertisers, are in business to get attention. This is not a mean, superficial thing. You may have an excellent plan to maintain world peace or quell industrial strife or lift the living standards of the sharecropper, but unless you can get people to listen to you, your ideas are futile.

One of the best ways for a speaker to insure attention is to have an effective beginning. There is no reason why he should not do with words what the advertisers do with printer's ink and the services of an artist.

Let's talk some more about soap. The manufacturers of this homely household article also use whale oil. Does that give us any ideas for a beginning of a talk? Well, suppose we open with a vivid description of the whaler *Grace B. Farquhar*, sixty-seven days out of San Pedro and rolling heavily in the mountainous seas of an antarctic gale. Or some interesting tale of the island of South Georgia, lonely outpost of whalers in the far South Seas. Since deepwater sailormen have fascinated the landlubber since the days of the Phoenicians, we might begin with a picture of Sigurd Bergdahl, first mate of the *Grace B. Farquhar*. Then, of course, there is the subject of the whale. Properly presented, he will interest anybody.

While it is true that not many businessmen draw their materials from such romantic places as Sumatra and South Georgia, the raw stuff of commerce always does have a story. If you make starch and buy your corn around Galesburg, Illinois, there is something or someone to talk about in connection with that corn. If your business is in Chicago and you don't even go outside the city limits for crushed stone from a gravel pit, there must be a story. Why is that pit there? Is it part of a terminal moraine left

by the glaciers? Get in touch with a geologist and find out what's back of that rock the trucks haul to town. Learn something about the Ice Age, the period of the great glaciers. It's interesting. Start your talk with that material. Use it to point a moral or make a comparison. You'll surprise people, please them; you'll gain the reputation of being an original speaker. They'll listen more attentively.

Get the story! A speaker should have a reporter's nose for a good story. In gathering material, in putting it together, in thinking about a prospective talk, a speaker should ask himself: What are the interesting things about this subject? What is the most spectacular occurrence in connection with it? Which detail has the greatest human-interest value?

The material in answer to any one of these questions should make a good beginning.

What about other types of beginnings? What about the so-called "humorous" story?

I am reminded tonight of the time that Pat and Mike were walking along a country road. They decided they could save time if they crossed a farmer's field where a few cows were grazing. Mike climbed over the fence and Pat was just about to follow when he noticed a bull standing ominously near the cows. At this, the boys changed their minds and continued their way outside the fence. Presently they saw an old cowhide lying in the grass. This gave them an idea. Putting the hide over their heads and with a wary eye for the bull, they started across the field with Mike in front and Pat bringing up the rear. . . .

This is the worst possible way to begin a talk. Never use it! Why?

In the first place, few people are natural tellers of this type of story. It requires a rare kind of gift. Consequently, to tackle this sad device is to court failure and embarrassment. Then, it has been in use for over half a century. For all this time it has been the shoddy baggage of well intentioned but unimaginative

speakers. Seldom does such a beginning have any connection with what follows. It is in itself a kind of comic convention of speech, and a man who uses this sort of opening is today almost a caricature of the "public speaker."

A quotation may be effective. A quotation often makes an excellent beginning if it is pertinent and close enough to the understanding and interests of the audience. Frequent use is made by speakers of the Bible, Shakespeare, Marcus Aurelius, and a host of historical personages, but it is doubtful if much of this has value. What Napoleon said at the battle of Austerlitz or what La Rochefoucauld said of women may be of interest in a remote, pedantic sort of way, but it is usually removed from the daily life of your listeners. An apt line from Proverbs or the Psalms may lend dignity to a talk, but few Americans are familiar enough with the Bible to recognize or appreciate it. Consequently, such a quotation is usually a poor choice.

The words of a man or woman more nearly contemporary would have greater effectiveness. If one were to address a group of college professors, for instance, this quotation from the late Stuart Pratt Sherman might raise quizzical eyebrows:

I am acquainted with no more essentially sluggish, improvident, resourceless, unambitious, and time-wasting creature than the ordinary professor of forty.

This jocular, half-insulting way of opening a talk is a very good one if the speaker is pretty sure of his audience. One must remember that relatively few men and women have a sense of humor—that is, the ability to see themselves as comic or something less than pillars of dignity and importance. Most people, whether they dump garbage into waiting trucks or preside at directors' meetings, take a very serious view of themselves.

If one were to talk on the American ideal of democracy and "with malice toward none," a quotation from Mississippi's late Senator Bilbo might pose a strident paradox:

I call on every red-blooded white man to use *any means* to keep the niggers away from the polls. If you don't understand what that means you are just plain dumb.

Quotations must always be identified, of course, and there are various ways of doing this. One of the most obvious is simply to state: "General Dwight D. Eisenhower has said, 'Intelligent people are not isolationists.'"

If one used such a quotation and its identification to preface a talk on, let us say, American foreign policy, it would be well to enter immediately into a definite and arresting explanation of just what an isolationist is. In fact, this quotation could be followed by the rhetorical question, "What is an isolationist?" The best explanation would be an illustration or story. If this story is vivid, the audience will understand. A purely academic definition may be forgotten in thirty seconds.

An enlightened Chicago businessman, Mr. Whipple Jacobs, of the Belden Manufacturing Company, has said: "The mortal enemy of the free-enterprise system is monopoly."

This blunt statement is a natural beginning for a talk on monopoly. Concrete examples of this flourishing menace to American business very logically follow.

Quotations need not always be serious or profound. Often glib statements with a touch of whimsey have more appeal. This frank admission of rumba-bandsman Xavier Cugat would be an excellent opening sentence for a talk on the esthetic ideal in music:

I'd rather play *Chiquita Banana* tonight and have my swimming pool than play Bach and starve.

It is a certainty that scholars will never record this realistic utterance, but it does represent a viewpoint. The same is true of Orson Welles's comment:

A woman with her hair combed up always looks as if she were going some place, either to the opera or the shower bath—depending on the woman.

People in very humble positions often say things which have more power to make an audience think than statements from those whose names make news. If Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick or the Pope says something about prayer, a certain number of people are interested. However, if a speaker quotes the old negro preacher who said, "Unless a man's in trouble, his prayers ain't got no suction," his circle of listeners will expand.

Startle the audience! Shortly after the outbreak of World War II, an officer from the provost marshal's office, in addressing a group of new officer appointees, said:

One drink of whiskey, gentlemen, can get you court-martialed, stripped of your rank, sentenced to hard labor, deprived of your family, and denounced in your home town newspaper as a disgrace to the armed forces of this nation!

After this initial eye-opener, the officer went on to explain just how this disastrous train of events had actually happened to one man. It was an extreme case, granted, but this opening reference made a startling beginning for the talk. This is often an effective way to catch your audience immediately. If you have knowledge of unusual facts or strange events in connection with your subject, use it.

Another speaker made his audience aware of the hidden nether world of the cartel with this surprise beginning:

When an American soldier on Guadalcanal took an atabrine tablet to ward off malaria, who controlled the manufacture of this tablet? The Germans. When he lay wounded in the jungle and the doctors administered sulfa, who directed and restricted the output of this drug? The Germans. When an Air Corps gunner peered at an oncoming plane through his plexiglas turret, who regulated the output of plexiglas? The Germans. When a Navy Commander fixed his submarine periscope or battleship rangefinder on a target, who monopolized the quantity of this optical glass? The Germans. Yes, gentlemen, the Germans!

Ask a question. This is old, but, like pickles at a picnic, it is

always good. A question intrigues people, makes them wonder and sometimes think. If the opening question is something of a shock, it is especially effective: "Are your children delinquent?" "Are you a failure at forty?" "Are you a Fascist?" "Do American businessmen really believe in free enterprise?" "Is the high tariff simply a racket?" "Can communism win America?" "Do college graduates make more money?"

CONCLUSION

Public speaking is much like fishing. Men who give some time and thought to the habits of the trout usually have something to show for it. Speaking, like fishing, is an art—a fascinating study in what catches the fancy of human beings. It is a study of what makes them respond and act.

The merit of what you have to say is not enough. It must be dressed up, made colorful. A fishhook is a thing of great merit; it is the serious message to the fish. Yet, they remain unimpressed. There's no action, no response until you furnish the hook with spinners or tuft it with attractive feathers. Then, if you drop it into the right place at the right time and manage it with some skill, there's usually success.

A speaker, if he is an honorable man, is not baiting a hook; but, regardless of his subject, he is trying to capture the attention and perhaps the imagination of an audience. For this, some artistry is necessary.

The beginning of a talk should make an audience say to themselves: "This is good. This is interesting. I'm glad I came." It should catch their attention immediately. It should be vivid, vital, of that stuff that stirs and holds people. It should be concrete, definite, specific. It should be abrupt and without preliminary.

Never tell an audience what you are going to say. Say it!

If you have a story about an eccentric recluse named John Wardman who died and left a lifetime hoard of \$20,000 in gold

pieces to his hated relatives—if they could find where he buried it—never start your talk by saying, “I would like to tell you tonight about an old miser named John Wardman,” or, “I am reminded tonight of the story of an old miser named John Wardman.”

With this type of opening sentence you are wasting time and effect in needless preliminary. Plunge into your story immediately:

They found the body of John Wardman last Wednesday night. He had died in his sleep in the little frame house on Court Street which not a single other person had entered in over thirty years. Hating his relatives bitterly, he left them a strange legacy. In a scribbled note he directed them to enjoy his life's savings of \$20,000 in gold pieces. Then, with ironic afterthought, he wrote, “That is, if you can ever find them.”

What difference does it make if your audience never knew John Wardman? They're bound to be curious. They'll want to know who he was and why you are talking about him. Don't spoil a good talk or a good beginning with premature explanations or preliminary.

In a talk on plywood, the modern miracle product of the lumber industry, a speaker began his remarks in this blunt fashion:

On a sultry August night in the summer of 1938, a sleek super-streamliner of one of our western railroads eased quietly out of the terminal on West Madison Street in Chicago. Gathering speed rapidly, the whirring Diesels of the powerful locomotive soon had the cars of the longest train in the world snaking across the flat farmlands of Illinois and Iowa. Rolling across the railroad bridge at Council Bluffs just as dawn was breaking through the mists on the river, the crack train slowed effortlessly to a stop at Omaha, Nebraska.

From here the speaker continued his dramatic scene of the great streamliner hurtling westward until the front wheels of the locomotive hit an open rail on Humboldt Canyon Bridge in Nevada. In the wreck that ensued, he wished to point out that

the plywood panels in the damaged Pullman cars withstood the shock even better than steel. The story led directly into his main subject. This beginning was direct, dramatic, effective!

Don't begin a talk by telling your audience that you're glad to be with them. They don't care. Also, don't waste time in telling them what a privilege it is to speak to them. Half of the time you don't mean it, so why bore them with hypocritical pleasantries? An audience wants to hear a talk and a good one. They're completely disinterested in commonplace remarks. Surprise them! Be different! Be good!

Start your talk with a quotation if you wish, but select one that has meaning for a particular audience. What "Schnozzle" Durante says about college freshmen may have far more appeal for some people than a sententious statement of Harvard's president. Startle an audience, shock them, wake them up and make them think, but do it discreetly. Remember that human beings are touchy. A true sense of humor is not one of the prodigal endowments of the race. Don't make too much fun of them in your opening remarks.

Grasp the attention of your audience at once. Pull them up out of their lethargy and indifference. Remember: First impressions count.

CHAPTER 3

☞ Beta Theta Pi, the Excelsior Fertilizer Works, and the Concatenated Order of the Hoo-Hoo . . . all believe in Americanism

(Use concrete words if you want to be a popular speaker)

Most little girls have the feeling at one time or another that they'd like to punch some little boy's nose for him. Sooner or later, they forget about it. All except Melinda.

She used to go out of her way to find things to do that would make her strong. Running errands for the corner drug store. . . . Teaching gym classes in high school. Wherever there was hard work to be done, there was Melinda pushing in for more than her share . . . until three years ago when Melinda was 15.

She marched into the one place in town where you have to be strong to do the job and asked for work. It was the town blacksmith shop in San Bernardino, California.

The blacksmith thought his ears had gone bad on him. Here was a 15-year-old girl, asking for a job swinging a sledge hammer. He laughed.

Melinda said nothing. She just walked over, picked up one of those 16 pound hammers, and swatted the shop anvil a ringing, shattering blow.

"How's that?" she asked. She was hired.

That's three years ago, mind you. And Melinda has been on the job ever since, helping forge parts used to keep railroad engines running.

And with every passing summer, Melinda has been getting prettier . . . and huskier . . . and lonelier.

Because Melinda doesn't want to smack little boys on the nose anymore. Matter of fact, she'd like a date now and then. And, after what happened a few weeks ago, her chances seem even worse than ever.

One of San Bernardino's young eligibles asked her out for an evening of all-around fun at a traveling carnival. Melinda just forgot herself and had a good time. They strolled into the arena where you hit the gong for a cigar. Her boy friend swung and just missed. Melinda swung and knocked the bell off.

With a pretty blush, Melinda gave her date the cigar, and they moved on. It was the same thing at the tent where you try to hit the man who sticks his head through a hole in the canvas. Melinda knocked the man out with her first baseball. She didn't even notice when her date began to get nervous. She was laughing so hard at herself she didn't notice his laugh was getting a little hysterical.

Going home, Melinda prepared to fidget and fluster prettily if her boy friend tried to kiss her. She didn't have to bother. He kept a good two feet away in the car, and didn't even shake hands when they parted at the front door.

Well, big news travelled fast in a small town. And the story of Melinda, the Mighty, went twice as fast. In the past four weeks, Melinda's date book has been ceiling zero . . . and promises to stay that way.

Only two fellows have asked her for a date in the past two months. One she didn't particularly care for. So, without thinking, she gave him a good slap when he tried to kiss her good-night. A very good slap.

He lost two teeth.

The other fellow was a little guy who, right now, is just like Melinda was a few years ago. Someone's always picking on him.

He asked Melinda for a date, then explained that he was going to take her to a dance, insult an old enemy of his, and have her hit him.

Melinda declined, with tears in her eyes.

The United Press Radio sent out this bit about the Mighty Melinda by Jay Breen. It jerked out of ticker machines in radio

stations all over the country, along with news of President Truman, the United Nations, the steel and coal strikes. Why did they bother with it?

Why did a huge organization like the United Press pause in the day's spate of news to pound out an insignificant tale about an obscure girl in a California railroad town?

Melinda had human-interest value.

People are interested in people. More than anything else, they are interested in the doings of human beings. People are a fundamental appeal for attention—perhaps the most important one.

The human element will vitalize any subject. Thousands of speakers have bored audiences to stupefaction with discourses on machinery, processes, materials—subjects which inherently had little life for their listeners. However, they could have taken these same subjects, surrounded them with the people who naturally would be associated with them, and made their talks instructive, impressive, and even entertaining.

Ever talk about a punch press? To most people it's a stodgy piece of machinery. Nobody wants to hear a talk about it. But wait a moment. Men operate punch presses. Women do, too. Here's Joe Waters, punch-press operator. He was born in Capetown, South Africa. Used to be a gold miner at Witwatersrand. Got that scar over his right eye in a saloon fight. It's a good story. Get him to tell you about it. He left The Rand to become a merchant seaman. Became third officer on the British tramp *Essex Trader*. Knocked about the west coast of Africa. Can tell plenty about ivory, apes, and peacocks. Worked for a while on a river steamer on the Congo. Heard the "blood-lust song" of the native blacks. Saw gorillas in their forest haunts. Can chant the songs of African boatmen.

That punch press less stodgy?

If one had to give a talk on such an unprepossessing subject, it would be a shrewd thing to put in quite a bit about Joe. He's interesting. Once you have people absorbed in Joe's story, they're

quite likely to find something interesting in the machine he operates.

College students without much experience in public speaking often like to talk about their summer jobs. They flounder painfully with machinery which spills corn into a can or flips beets into scalding water. They give long and statistical descriptions of logging equipment in operation. They fill their talks with mechanism which has no appeal and neglect the human interest which has infinite appeal.

Describe things in terms of people. While it is true that one cannot wander too far from his original subject, it is always possible to describe and explain things in terms of people. If you must re-create the din of a canning factory, talk also about the people who work there. Tell about Mollie Swensen who has had her rough capable hands in vegetables for over thirty years. What does she think of life and love? Have too many string beans warped her outlook?

This interpretation of things and ideas in terms of the people associated with them is a successful device practiced by all widely circulated magazines. When the *Saturday Evening Post* carried a series of articles on Brooks Brothers, the famous old New York City clothiers, what did they write about? A lot of shirts, suits, handkerchiefs? Of course not. They said something about shirts and suits, but they had a great deal to say about Abraham Lincoln and General Grant and myriads of other notables who have purchased Brooks Brothers' clothes. They wrote of the men who founded the business, of the venerable employees who served generations of distinguished Americans. The articles dealt chiefly with people.

Prize fighting is a dirty racket. To many men and women it is a stupid, repulsive trade. They neither patronize it nor read about it. And yet countless people read about the late "Bummy" Davis and became momentarily interested in the prize ring because of this article in *Time*:

No matter what else was said about Brooklyn's flat-nosed, puffy-lipped "Bummy" Davis, no man could deny that he would fight anything on two feet.

Bummy, born Abraham Davidoff in the brick jungles of Brooklyn's Brownsville, made his first impact on the world as a boy knish* peddler. In a short time he had all but eliminated competition, not through business acumen but by belting the brains out of other little knish peddlers. Though he had two tough brothers, "Big Gangy" and "Little Gangy," Bummy took care of his own problems. When his opponents were too big he clouted them with a fearsome weapon—one of his mother's stockings with coal stuffed in the toe. For entertainment he dropped flower pots off fire escapes on passers-by, and dodged the truant officer.

UP TO THE BAR. When he was 13 Bummy got a better job, as bartender in a speakeasy. A little later he became a prize fighter at Ridgewood Grove, a dingy club behind the Myrtle Avenue car barns. As in his earlier endeavors, he was an instant success. He would battle a buzz saw. Also, he was one of the dirtiest fighters the ring ever produced, and thousands came to see what he would try next.

Bummy moved into Madison Square Garden, fought Lou Ambers, Tony Canzoneri, Henry Armstrong and the top welter-weights of the late '30s, made \$60,000 in four years. As befitted his new social position, he began wearing banana-yellow sports shirts and stylish checkered slacks. But he still trained at Charlie Beecher's smoke-filled poolroom in East New York.

BIG NIGHT AT CHARLIE'S. Beecher's gave an open house for him when he got famous. Hot pastrami was served, a trombone, guitar and saxophone trio played *When I Grow Too Old to Dream*, and in the back room Bummy obligingly ruined a couple of sparring partners for the entertainment of close friends.

As they might have guessed that night, success hadn't changed Bummy any: he still got into trouble. A few months later he was arrested for beating up a Brooklyn clothing salesman. At Madison Square Garden, in 1940, he fouled Fritzie Zivic, no Galahad himself, with ten groin punches in one round, wound up by kicking the referee, all but started a riot.

After that he joined the Army. He went AWOL, had to be

* A Yiddish leaden baked delicacy composed of a rich mixture, encased in dough.

jerked back to the ranks by MP's, was soon discharged. This year he retired from the ring, busied himself in affairs—the saloon and race-horse business. At 3 o'clock one morning last week he was sitting in a Canarsie bar and grill named Dudy's Tavern when four holdup men walked in, yanked out pistols, ordered the bartender to hand over his cash.

LAST FIGHT. Enraged at this disturbance, Bummy roared, "Leave the guy alone!" When the gunmen showed no signs of following his advice he seized the nearest by a coat lapel, shoved him into position, then knocked him clear out of the joint with a murderous left. Unnerved, the other holdup men backed out, shooting at point-blank range. Bummy dived after them, swinging wildly and roaring horrible epithets. Bullets hit him in the spine, the lungs, the right arm. He kept swinging his left. He was outside, running for his automobile to give further chase, before he finally fell dead.*

History will record that in the year 1945 much was said about the atomic bomb. To the man digging in his garden and anxious about the soaring price of milk, the bomb meant an awesome explosion which looked rather pretty in the motion-picture newsreels. He knew it flattened the city of Hiroshima, and he knew he ought to be greatly concerned about its potentialities, but it was all so new. And that talk about plutonium, uranium, fission! It was hard to understand, all quite out of his world.

Would personalities vitalize the atomic bomb? Would the introduction of some of the men who juggled formulas and watched experiments behind guarded doors make the atomic bomb more comprehensible to the man on the street? Of course it would.

However, mention of such Olympians from the realm of science as Karl and Arthur Compton might fail to do this. Their work lies too far beyond the pale of layman understanding. Even the knowledge of such dear-to-the-heart trivia as what these men eat for breakfast and whether they ever wear long underwear might fail to make them seem "human." What could be done?

* Courtesy of *Time*, copyright Time Inc., 1945.

In the *Reader's Digest Twentieth Anniversary Anthology* there is an article by Milton S. Mayer condensed from the November, 1938, issue of the *Scientific Monthly*. It is called "Mother of Comptons." It tells of Otelia Compton, mother of the illustrious Karl, Arthur, Mary, and Wilson. It is rich in human interest. It makes Karl, the former president of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Arthur, the Nobel prizewinner, neighborly, comfortable to have around:

Honorary degrees are supposed to signify achievement—sometimes achievement in science or the arts, sometimes (though seldom openly) the achievement of the college in wheedling a new dormitory from a prosperous citizen. A few years ago Ohio's historic Western College for Women bestowed a doctorate of laws for neither of these reasons. To a woman, youthful at 74, it awarded the LL.D. "for outstanding achievement as wife and mother of Comptons."

The ceremony over, the new doctor hurried back to the welcome obscurity of an old frame house in Wooster, Ohio. Otelia Compton doesn't want to be famous, and she isn't. But her four children are.

Those who extol the virtues of heredity may examine with profit the Compton family tree. The ancestors of the first family of science were farmers and mechanics. The only one of them associated with scholarship was a carpenter who helped nail together the early buildings of Princeton. There was no reason to predict that the union of Elias Compton and Otelia Augspurger, two country schoolteachers, would produce columns in *Who's Who*.

Yet Karl, their oldest son, is a distinguished physicist, now president of the great scientific institution, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Mary, the second child, is principal of a missionary school in India and wife of the president of Allahabad Christian College; Wilson, the third, is a noted economist and lawyer . . . while Arthur, the "baby," is, at 45, one of the immortals of science—winner of the Nobel Prize in Physics. . . .

Otelia Compton, characteristically, denies that she has a recipe for rearing great men and women. She will admit that her children are "worthy," but what the world calls great has small

significance for her. When Arthur won the world's highest award in science, her first words were, "I hope it doesn't turn his head. . . ."

Cornered in her kitchen, Otelia Compton simply had to admit that she knows something about motherhood. . . .

Her formula is so old it is new, so orthodox it is radical, so commonplace that we have forgotten it and it startles us. "We used the Bible and common sense," she told me.

Would she put hard work first in her lexicon? Mrs. Compton thought a moment. "Yes," she said, "I would. That is, hard work in the right direction. . . ."

And what is the "right kind" of hard work?

"The kind of work that is good in itself."

"What's wrong with working for money?" I asked.

The mother of Comptons exploded. "Everything! To teach a child that money-making for the sake of money is worthy is to teach him that the only thing worth while is what the world calls success. That kind of success has nothing to do either with usefulness or happiness. Parents teach it and the schools teach it, and the result is an age that thinks that money means happiness. The man who lives for money never gets enough, and he thinks that that is why he isn't happy. The real reason is that he has had the wrong goal of life set before him.

"Children should be taught how to think, and thinking isn't always practical. . . ."

While the material quoted in these excerpts would not in itself render the mysteries of atomic action less abstruse, nevertheless it helps. It is always easier to understand a thing if there is some personal element involved. Millions of wives have found this to be true. Because their husbands were engrossed in model-railway building, trapshooting, or thermodynamics, they found that they had, at least, an approach to these unfamiliar interests. Otelia Compton, as distinguished a mother as she is, seems like one of the neighbors down the street in any American town. She seems like "homefolks." Consequently, when one knows something about her, the illustrious physicists Karl and Arthur become less remote and their achievements not quite so formidable.

If you wish to avoid speech failure—BE CONCRETE! As important as it is to know and to utilize the fundamental appeals for attention such as those discussed thus far—crime, nature, money, people—a speaker must learn to express his material in a form which audiences understand. A successful speaker must have an alert comprehension of the words “abstract” and “concrete.”

Most public speakers are bunglers. They exist on public sufferance. Their continuance is a testimony to the fact that we as a people are either too civilized or too apathetic to be violent. Why is it that the average speaker is, in the blunt words of these latter days, a “flop”?

Since we are still considering the preparation and composition of talks rather than their delivery, one answer to the above question is: The average speaker is a “flop” because he is too abstract.

What is meant by the two words “abstract” and “concrete”?

The dictionary defines abstract as: “Considered apart from any application to a particular object,” or “General, as opposed to particular,” or “Used without reference to a thing.”

What does all of that mean?

In the United States we love to speak expansively of our “democracy,” our “freedom,” our “individualism.” Here we have three abstract words. They refer to a structure of government, a condition of government, and perhaps a national characteristic. They refer only to generalities; they are not in any way limited to specific or definite things. They do not indicate clearly any particular meaning. It is quite possible that almost every person would have a different idea or definition of all three.

Take the example of the gangster Charles “ Lucky” Luciano. One of the chief characters in the New York racket prosecutions of 1936 by Thomas Dewey, what might have been his conception of the abstract word “freedom”? It is doubtful whether his reptilian brain could have grappled with abstractions, but how did he interpret “freedom” in his daily life? In the first place, he never bothered to become a citizen. He chose to appropriate the obvious advantages of life in the United States and to enjoy com-

plete "freedom" from any obligations or duties as a member of this society. He set himself up in business as the head of a gang of criminal thugs whose specialty was the beating and intimidation of defenseless people, especially women. Lucky employed political and financial means to grant himself "freedom" from any annoyance by the law. He expressed the essential tenet of his philosophy of life by saying: "I never was a crumb, and if I have to be a crumb I'd rather be dead." A "crumb" in Mr. Luciano's language was a man who worked and saved and lived a quiet, orderly existence. Lucky wanted "freedom" from all of this.

As the trial of the gangster went on, it became apparent that "freedom" to Lucky Luciano meant unlimited money to spend, numerous women to enjoy, quantities of expensive silk underclothes, and a long list of costly places to visit "in style." None of this, of course, was to entail any constructive work by Mr. Luciano. Also, the fact that this delightful existence, this "freedom" was to come as the fruit of vice, mayhem, bribery, and even murder was of no particular consequence.

It may be that no one ever asked ex-Mayor Frank Hague of Jersey City for a definition of the abstract word "democracy." It is quite possible that Mr. Hague, too, seldom thought in terms of abstractions—most people don't. Americans generally think of "democracy" as something that has to do with the closing line of the Gettysburg Address—"government of the people, by the people, for the people." They think of the word in connection with the New England town meeting and the Declaration of Independence. They think of being a Baptist or a Presbyterian or of publishing a newspaper that can disagree most heartily with the President. They think of it in connection with a man saying what he believes about the American Federation of Labor or the Standard Oil Company. They think of "democracy" as free speech and free press and free religion. What was "democracy" like in Jersey City?

It was called the worst American city. There, apparently, the

Constitution of the United States meant nothing. One critic of this peculiar area said that little short of the state militia could have insured a fair election. Investigators were jailed, beaten, terrorized. Speakers who disagreed with Mr. Hague, editors who suggested that his ideas and tactics were out of keeping with American ideals of government were set upon by mobsmen and police. When one Protestant minister invited a lecturer whose views were unsympathetic to the mayor, it was found that every automobile parked around the church where he was to speak had four flat tires. Private citizens who publicly announced any disagreement with Mr. Hague promptly found their taxes raised to destructive heights. Judges and the courts—all controlled by the mayor—found friends and henchmen infallibly innocent of wrong. Such was the background of the abstract word “democracy” in Jersey City, New Jersey.

A speaker loses effect if he uses many abstract words. Every alert person in the audience will interpret them in the light of his own experience and background. The same word will have an entirely different meaning for different people. Consequently, the speaker’s meaning and intention can be lost.

“Individualism” is a good instance of this. Whatever it is, most people secretly believe they have it. Women, especially, in spite of the appalling sameness of most of them, love to fancy themselves distinguished by this attractive trait. Frank Lloyd Wright, the architect, is said to possess “individualism” to an unusual and spectacular degree. Known for his sprawling modernistic structures like the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, what might the word mean in the experience of Mr. Wright?

He has said, “Not only do I intend to be the greatest architect who has yet lived, but the greatest who will ever live.” Laughing uproariously at the opinions of others, he told the Indiana Society of Architects, “Gentlemen, you are withering on the vine.” Possessed of a serene egotism seldom equaled, Frank Lloyd Wright is utterly contemptuous of his professional colleagues. He

sees little merit in anything not suggested and designed by him. His career has been an expression of "individualism" to a remarkable degree.

Politicians love abstract words. With them it is so easy to say one thing and mean another. These gentlemen find great comfort in the noncommittal vagueness of "democracy," "freedom," "opportunity," "patriotism," "loyalty." As this book is written, one senatorial aspirant from a Northwest state dares to proclaim, boldly, from billboards that he stands for "Americanism." That's splendid! Who doesn't? The National Association of Manufacturers would cheer for it. So would the American Communist party. It is a certainty the Roman Catholic Church would embrace it as would likewise the Jehovah's Witnesses. Dan Tobin of the Teamster's Union would rise hand in hand with the Daughters of the American Revolution to applaud its lordly sound. So would Beta Theta Pi, the Excelsior Fertilizer Works, and the Concatenated Order of the Hoo-Hoo. They all believe in Americanism.

But—what is it?

It is true that the speaker who uses many abstract words will dissipate the intended meaning of his talk. It is also true that the more aggressive and thoughtful people of an audience will have a tendency to interpret general words according to their individual experience. However, there is another and far more significant reason why the man on the platform should stay away from the use of vague terms.

Abstract words bore people. Abstract words are void of the power to stir an audience. They're dull. They're wet fuel on a dark night. You can talk about "duty," "progress," "values," and "reform" until the rattle of the milkman is heard in the streets and never put luster in a single listener's eye—that is, unless you explain those terms with vivid examples. Abstract words are simply not of the stuff that fixes people's attention.

Furthermore, most human beings can not think abstractly. It

requires a high order of trained intelligence to get sense or meaning out of purely abstract words. In the last ten years we have heard much about "fascism." That word probably has appeared on newspaper front pages at least once each day for all that time. And yet, how many people can define fascism or give even a rough idea of what it means? Suppose that you wanted to tell someone about it and you said: "Fascism invariably utilizes the stratagems of subversion and disorder; it operates secretly through organized coercion while outwardly maintaining a false respect for established norms; it works through assassination, both actual and political; it succeeds often through the tactics of confusion, of intimidation, of sheer mass terror."

Would your friend understand fascism? If he were of average background and education, the chances are that he wouldn't. That flood of weighty abstractions would floor him.

During the war just over, a well-known radio news commentator of international reputation came to speak at Minter Field, Bakersfield, California. It was advertised throughout the camp that he would speak on fascism—would tell the men just what that word meant and what it involved. The auditorium was jammed, not because the GI's thirsted for knowledge, but because the commentator was very well known. He talked for forty-five minutes. He failed miserably. He chose the method of every unsuccessful speaker from time immemorial: he attempted to explain one abstraction in terms of other abstractions. It was a dismal performance. The men knew less than when they went in, and these were high-rated Air Corps technicians; they were neither stupid nor slow. Abstract words are that way.

Concrete words, on the other hand, are power and fire. Concrete words name actual things instead of qualities or attributes. They are specific, definite. They indicate what is tangible and actual rather than what exists in the realm of ideas. When Thomas Wolfe wrote of the Cant family in his great novel *Look Homeward, Angel*, he didn't say that they "lived well" or that they always had "a lot of good food." He said:

In the morning they rose in a house pungent with breakfast cookery, and they sat at a smoking table loaded with brains and eggs, ham, hot biscuit, fried apples seething in their gummed syrups, honey, golden butter, fried steak, scalding coffee. Or there were stacked batter-cakes, rum-colored molasses, fragrant brown sausages, a bowl of wet cherries, plums, fat juicy bacon, jam. At the mid-day meal, they ate heavily: a huge hot roast of beef, fat buttered lima-beans, tender corn smoking on the cob, thick red slabs of sliced tomatoes, rough savory spinach, hot yellow corn-bread, flaky biscuits, a deep-dish peach and apple cobbler spiced with cinnamon, tender cabbage, deep glass dishes piled with preserved fruits—cherries, pears, peaches. At night they might eat fried steak, hot squares of grits fried in egg and butter, pork-chops, fish, young fried chicken.*

While usually it isn't possible for a speaker to engage in this catalogue type of description, nevertheless the vivid, sharp word pictures which Wolfe created are excellent for a speaker to note and study. In the same book, when Wolfe wished to tell of the young child, Eugene, who was becoming aware of the world into which he had been born, its sensations, sounds, and odors, he wrote:

He knew the inchoate sharp excitement of hot dandelions in young Spring grass at noon; the smell of cellars, cobwebs, and built-on secret earth; in July, of watermelons bedded in sweet hay, inside a farmer's covered wagon; of canteloupe and crated peaches; and the scent of orange rind, bitter-sweet, before a fire of coals. He knew the good male smell of his father's sitting-room; of the smooth worn leather sofa, with the gaping horse-hair rent; of the blistered varnished wood upon the hearth; of the heated calf-skin bindings; of the flat moist plug of apple tobacco, stuck with a red flag; of wood-smoke and burnt leaves in October; of the brown tired autumn earth; of honey-suckle at night; of warm nasturtiums; of a clean ruddy farmer who comes weekly with printed butter, eggs and milk; of fat limp underdone bacon and of coffee; of a bakery-oven in the wind; of large deep-hued string-beans smoking-hot and seasoned well with salt and butter; of a room of old pine boards in which books and carpets have

* Thomas Wolfe, *Look Homeward, Angel* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929).

been stored, long closed; of Concord grapes in their long white baskets.†

Have you ever ridden all night in the old-type railway day coach? It's a miserable experience. Usually it's a hot, smelly ride in a car full of uncomfortable people and the inevitable crying baby. Thousands of people have spoken and written of such an experience, but Thomas Wolfe could take a few concrete sentences, put them together with vividness of detail, and create an almost painfully realistic picture of all such day coaches. Note the careful use of concrete detail in this bit from *Look Homeward, Angel*:

The day-coach was hot, full of the weary smell of old red plush. People dozed painfully, distressed by the mournful tolling of the bell, and the grinding halts. A baby wailed thinly. Its mother, a gaunt wisp-haired mountaineer, turned the back of the seat ahead, and bedded the child on a spread newspaper. Its wizened face peeked dirtily out of its swaddling discomfort of soiled jackets and pink ribbon. It wailed and slept. At the front of the car, a young hill-man, high-boned and red, clad in corduroys and leather leggings, shelled peanuts steadily, throwing the shells into the aisle. People trod through them with a sharp masty crackle. The boys, bored, paraded restlessly to the car-end for water. There was a crushed litter of sanitary drinking-cups upon the floor, and a stale odor from the toilets.

"Broadway" is an interesting word. It's an abstraction, of course, unless people refer actually to the street of that name. Usually, however, it means something else. One writer has expressed his conception of "Broadway" in concrete words which present both a funny and grim picture of what he says is essentially "a state of mind."

Broadway is the place where Ina Claire socked Jed Harris in the eye. And where Louis Wolheim walked bare-chested and hairy down the street with nothing on but his pants (*What Price*

† Thomas Wolfe, *Look Homeward, Angel* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929).

Glory?). It is the place of the cheap boardinghouses where bleached and garrulous ancients cook vegetables from Paddy's Market over a gas grate in their rooms and walk around in pink kimonos and say, "But my dear, you should have seen me in *Hamlet*." And the place where Maxwell Anderson tries to be better than Eugene O'Neill, and William Shakespeare has the most consistent success of them all . . . it also is the place where Hollywood stars must stand on their own and often don't, and names are made in the space of three hours . . . where the Automats are full of slugs, and everybody calls everybody else "Dear" and slips the knife delicately and swiftly into the back . . . where the standard greeting is, "My dear, you were wonderful." and the standard reply is, "My dear, I was wonderful," and the saddest words are, "They cut my lines." *

A speaker should make a consistent and deliberate effort to express all of his ideas in concrete words. As has been mentioned before, the beginning of a talk is paramount—it should absorb the attention of an audience at once—but this attention will dwindle if the speaker fails to deliver a succession of specific images which people can grasp. Ordinarily, human beings cannot cling to generalities. The entire talk should be specific and concrete in nature.

Professor John Ise of the University of Kansas gave a remarkable address some years ago before the Mid-West Economic Association at Des Moines, Iowa. His subject was "Values in a Crazy World." Instead of launching into the usual academic address, he spoke with an intelligent and significant use of concrete words which has established this particular talk as a model.

With such a subject as "Values in a Crazy World," Professor Ise naturally wanted to say something about the trivial nature of much in American civilization. Notice the virile way in which he presented ideas in this particular paragraph:

A century or two later, a great and highly civilized people,

* Reprinted from the February, 1938, issue of *Fortune* by special permission of the Editors.

mostly descendants of the fifty thousand heroes who braved the dangers of the briny deep in the good ship *Mayflower*, in order to give the pagan Indians the blessings of rum and Christian civilization, found a new way of life, which was to be the efflorescence of many centuries of developing culture. They invented engines and thermostats, statistics and scientific management, advertising and salesmanship, B. O. and Halitosis, dental cripples and dishpan hands, cathedral bath rooms, calories and vitamins, cigar lighters and near beer, crooning, kidnapping and community singing, plastic surgery and schoolgirl complexions; but, alas, they knew not Plato, and they knew not Beethoven. Their unquenchable energies they devoted to the perfection of new engines with which to transport themselves quickly from places where they were bored to tears to other places where they were bored to death. Knowing the substantial joy of being comfortable, they worked themselves into hardened arteries and high blood pressure and Bright's Disease devising new ways of being still more comfortable, until they attained a level of bodily comfort quite as high as that of hogs in the shade of the old apple tree. Indifferent to the pain and tedium that they suffered in leisure time, they invented numberless gadgets to provide still more leisure time, which they devoted to such cultured activities as bridge, fan dancing, brotherly lodges and ballyhoo, flagpole sitting, stamp collecting, walkathons, endurance flying, and organizations for the uplift of the underprivileged classes that have no leisure time in which to be bored; to the invention of new gewgaws with which to protect themselves from the boredom of their own intellectual and cultural aridity; to the task of learning to use the gadgets that they had in their cars and kitchens and bath rooms; and to the protection of American gadget civilization from insidious communists.*

The weather is a dull topic. As conversational fare, it is in a class with beans and prunes at a banquet. But it *can* be interesting. Here is one writer's treatment of a short rash of unseasonable weather which swept across Canada a year or two ago. The whimsical use of concrete words and statements lends sparkle even to this exhausted subject:

* *Vital Speeches*, December 15, 1937.

From deep in the central U. S. a puckish zephyr danced northward, trailing an unseasonable perfume of spring across the central and maritime provinces. Dandelions bloomed in Hamilton. Three tulips popped up outside Fort Erie's police station; Elgin County farmers got in some early plowing; a Proton farmer tapped some maple trees, found the sap running. At Goderich the courthouse lawn had to be trimmed. Bees and mosquitoes began buzzing around Dundalk. A flock of blackbirds chirped near Truro.

In Ottawa, the broad lawn on Parliament Hill shook off its mantle of snow. All across the province deep drifts fell away to little dirty mounds; streets were choked with slush. The Sauble River, the Etobicoke, the Humber, the Sydenham and the Big Head boiled over their banks. As the bottom went out of roads in the Maritimes, logging virtually stopped.

The temperature rose to 52° in Montreal, 57° in Toronto, 62° in Windsor. Carefree citizens kicked off their galoshes, doffed their heavy overcoats to enjoy one of the warmest, longest and most widespread January thaws in recorded weather history.

But it was too good to last. A cold Arctic blast gathered momentum west of Hudson Bay, moved eastward across the Lakes. Canadians sighed; winter was here again."†

*People too must be described in concrete words. They must be definite individuals, not shadowy nonentities in the listener's mind. The characters of Charles Dickens live vividly through the years not alone because they seem actual people, but because of the specific language employed by the novelist. Of Bill Sikes, the thug and housebreaker in *Oliver Twist*, Dickens wrote:*

He had a brown hat on his head, and a dirty Belcher handkerchief round his neck: with the long frayed ends of which he smeared the beer from his face as he spoke; disclosing, when he had done so, a broad heavy countenance with a beard of three days' growth, and two scowling eyes; one of which displayed various parti-colored symptoms of having been recently damaged by a blow.

Of the Dodger, one of Sikes's youthful accomplices in crime:

† Courtesy of *Time*, copyright Time Inc., 1946.

He was a snub-nosed, flat-browed, common-faced boy enough; and as dirty a juvenile as one would wish to see; but he had about him all the airs and manners of a man. He was short of his age: with rather bow-legs, and little, sharp, ugly eyes. His hat was stuck on the top of his head so lightly, that it threatened to fall off every moment; and would have done so, very often, if the wearer had not had a knack of every now and then giving his head a sudden twitch, which brought it back to its old place again. He wore a man's coat, which reached nearly to his heels. He had turned the cuffs back, half-way up his arm, to get his hands out of the sleeves: apparently with the ultimate view of thrusting them into the pockets of his corduroy trousers: for there he kept them. He was, altogether, as roystering and swaggering a young gentleman as ever stood four feet six, or something less, in his bluchers.

Of the repulsive Uriah Heep in *David Copperfield*, Dickens wrote:

I found Uriah reading a great fat book, with such demonstrative attention, that his lank fore-finger followed up every line as he read, and made clammy tracks along the page (or so I fully believed) like a snail. . . .

I observed that his nostrils, which were thin and pointed, with sharp dints in them, had a singular and most uncomfortable way of expanding and contracting themselves; that they seemed to twinkle instead of his eyes, which hardly ever twinkled at all. . . .

It was no fancy of mine about his hands, I observed; for he frequently ground the palms against each other as if to squeeze them dry and warm, besides often wiping them, in a stealthy way, on his pocket-handkerchief.

Tobias Smollett, the brilliant and sometimes smutty Scot whose lusty character, Commodore Hawser Trunnion, has bellowed for delighted readers these past two hundred years, has drawn an impressive picture of this seafaring gentleman attired for his wedding with Mrs. Grizzle:

He had put on, in honour of his nuptials, his best coat of blue broad-cloth, cut by a tailor of Ramsgate, and trimmed with five

dozen of brass buttons, large and small; his breeches were of the same piece, fastened at the knees with large bunches of tape; his waistcoat was of red plush, lapelled with green velvet, and garnished with vellum holes; his boots bore an infinite resemblance, both in color and shape, to a pair of leather buckets; his shoulder was graced with a broad buff belt, from whence depended a huge hanger with a hilt like that of a backsword; and on each side of his pommel appeared a rusty pistol, rammed in a case covered with a bearskin.

Giles, a dwarf in Charles Reade's *The Cloister and the Hearth*, is quite unforgettable:

Nature, relenting at having made Giles so small, had given him as a set-off the biggest voice on record. His very whisper was a bassoon. He was like those stunted wide-mouthed pieces of ordnance we see on fortifications; more like a flower-pot than a cannon; but ods tympana how they bellow!

On the opening page of George Eliot's *Romola*, one of the characters is singled out by this bit of description:

He was a gray-haired, broad-shouldered man, of the type which, in Tuscan phrase, is moulded with the fist and polished with the pickaxe; but the self-important gravity which had written itself out in the deep lines about his brow and mouth seemed intended to correct any contemptuous inferences from the hasty workmanship which Nature had bestowed on his exterior.

When he presents people in a talk, the speaker has neither time nor occasion for the elaborate descriptions of the novelist. Readers will spend hours or days on a novel. Listeners, however, will spend relatively few minutes on a speaker. His images of people must be concrete, but deft and carefully selected. In the description of people, a speaker should pick out a few vivid details which instantly suggest appearance and character.

For instance, we know that Smollett's Commodore Hawser Trunnion was a man full of bluster and show. He lived a loud,

eccentric life. In speaking of him dressed in his wedding togs, we should mention a few concrete details which not only describe his appearance, but suggest something of his extrovert character. We could say: "Trunnion appeared dressed for the wedding in a blue coat trimmed with five dozen brass buttons, a red plush waistcoat with green velvet lapels, and a big pair of boots which looked like leather buckets. To defend himself, he carried a huge sword and his saddle held two rusty pistols rammed in bear-skin holsters."

Of Uriah Heep, a speaker could say: "Uriah was a lank, clammy sort of man. One imagined that whatever he touched with his cold, moist hands would be streaked with tracks."

The long paragraph of description of the Dodger could be effectively expressed by a speaker in a short condensation: "He was a snub-nosed, bow-legged, dirty-faced tough who swagged insolently in a man's coat which reached to his heels and a hat which threatened to fall off at every thrust of his head."

Thomas Wolfe in *Look Homeward, Angel* told of Horse Hines, the undertaker, in a descriptive passage which could be used verbatim on the platform:

At this moment, Horse Hines, the undertaker, entered, producing, although he was not a thin man, the effect of a skeleton clad in a black frock coat. His long lantern mouth split horsily in a professional smile displaying big horse teeth in his white heavily starched face.*

CONCLUSION

In these latter days, when bathing girls beckon from every billboard, when the bawl of the crooner and the snivel of the soap opera are heard in the land, attention has become a fragile and tenuous thing. It is torn by a hundred competing distractions. The speaker must consider this. He is no longer in the enviable

* Thomas Wolfe, *Look Homeward, Angel* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929).

position he was years ago when a speech was an event and townspeople stood for two hours in boiling sun to hear his flowery dithyrambs. Today his subject matter must have a kind of staccato quality; he must learn the language of the concrete.

The preparation of successful talks constantly disciplines the speaker in the use of vivid picture language. It means the continual rejection of abstract terms and phrases and their restatement in words which inevitably will earn attention.

In most instances the speaker must learn to avoid the natural inclination to make statements like this one:

"The United Nations Organization faces almost insuperable obstacles in a postwar world still racked by fierce animosities and threatened with ultimate chaos."

It would be far better to think of actual elements in the world's dramatic violence and express these concretely thus:

"What lies ahead for the United Nations? Italian and Yugoslav stone one another in the streets of Trieste; election commissioners lie dead in the streets of Warsaw; the vultures gorge on Hindu and Moslem in the streets of Calcutta; and even near ancient Parnassus, Greek kills Greek in bloody civil conflict."

Businessmen too often impair the effectiveness of their statements through the same human tendency to dwell on lofty and meaningless words. This statement is typical:

"In the severe deflation which followed the First World War, the prices of agricultural commodities declined so sharply that millions of farmers faced bankruptcy and ruinous financial loss."

Again it would be much better to look into actual instances and then restate this same idea in words which listeners could take home with them:

"If you were a wheat farmer at Jamestown, North Dakota, at the close of the First World War, you might have sold your crop at the height of the boom in 1919 for \$10,000. Some time later, following the crash in 1920, the same crop brought hardly more than \$3,000. If you raised potatoes in far-off Idaho and you had

one more payment to make on your farm after 1919, the chances are that you were in trouble. Potatoes dropped 85 per cent in the steady decline after the crash, and a crop which netted you \$4,000 in 1919 brought \$600 a couple of years later. In the corn belt, things were equally bad. Stock feeders at Newton and Grinnell, Iowa, got less for fat corn-fed steers than they paid for these same animals as scrawny range cattle. Even if you lived in the Golden State, you were in trouble. Oranges rotted at the groves with a 76 per cent drop in market price. And if you raised peanuts in Virginia, it perhaps was cheaper to feed them to the hogs than bother about a sale. Agriculture everywhere collapsed, and in as short a time as eighteen months millions of farmers who had been independent and well off faced bankruptcy, the sheriff's sale, or heavy mortgage on their lands."

Concrete expression does not have to involve long and detailed pictures. Single sentences often do very well.

The following three pairs of sentences are examples:

"We are living in an age of marvelous scientific discovery."

"We are living in an age which has developed an infrared device for seeing in total darkness, a plastic preservative which keeps bread fresh for eight months, and a rocket bomber which may span the North Atlantic in forty minutes."

"The book is a history of various aspects of American life in the crazy twenties."

"The book discusses various aspects of life in the crazy twenties like flagpole sitting, the Teapot Dome scandal, the Florida real-estate boom, the stock-market crash, and the hysterical mob scenes at Valentino's funeral."

"The western United States are engaged in a strange course of self-destruction."

"In the plains and mountain regions of the western states, too large cattle herds bankrupt the land, destructive farming squanders the precious topsoil, and the saws of the lumbermen bite deeper and deeper into the last great heritage of pine and fir."

It is not the import of this chapter to say that abstract words or phrases should never be used. Often it is necessary to use them, especially in summarizing. Abstract words, abstract sentences have their place; but the speaker must always precede or follow them with clear concrete pictures of precisely what he means. Everything considered, it is the concrete word which moves people. It is the concrete word which plays on their imagination, their emotion, and guides their reason.

In the following talk, called "Douglas Fir Saga," which was prepared as a fire-prevention radio talk for the United States Forest Service, the speaker tries to create a series of pictures of the historical pageant which unfolded during the life development of a single Douglas fir. Note the use of explicit language.

DOUGLAS FIR SAGA

History tells us that Marco Polo returned to his native city of Venice about the year 1295. For more than sixteen years he had been in the sinister, jeweled east and the court of Kublai Khan. His father and uncle were with him; and when these three bronzed strangers prated to the Venetians of Burma, Mongolia, and the mysterious land of Tibet, they were looked upon as idlers, bearers of fantastic tales. But they carried diamonds and emeralds in dirty bundles of Oriental cloth; hardly the baggage of idlers. To establish their identity, they spilled out gold for a sumptuous feast where there was more talk of elephants, of jade, and the kingdom of good Prester John.

About this same time, on the north Pacific coast of the New World, a small, brown-winged seed fell out of the upper branches of a huge old fir. The tree stood on a mountain slope, and the down-drifting seed settled lightly on a patch of bare forest earth. It lay there dormant month after month. It lay through the long chill of winter while rains poured in from the coast and snow mantled the highest peaks. Then, one day, it opened. The new little fir tree which emerged was to live through six hundred years of the intense human struggle which we call history.

In the north of Europe, the dark dirty towns saw the last of the great men on horseback riding off proudly to fight on the shores of Palestine. They wore chain mail and each of them carried a shield emblazoned with the Holy Cross. The Crusades, the most extravagant and romantic enterprise of man, were drawing to an inglorious close; and Bohemond and Tancred and Richard the Lion-Hearted of England were becoming a golden legend.

As the fir seed opened, a tiny root went into the earth. Above the root, bright little spikes of needles appeared. Offshoots budded and frail green branches spread their star-spray patterns as the tree reached upward for girth and height. Nurtured then by the rain of many springs and the sun of many summers, the young tree grew straight and tall. The furrows of its white bark deepened. In the morning hours when the sweet, rich forest scent hung motionless in the air, deer nibbled about the base of the tree. On moonlit nights the shadowy phantom of a prowling cougar darkened the tree bole, then passed on in the silence.

The years turned in their effortless round. Ancient hoary trees, their rugged bark deep with moss and fern, their stout hearts weakened from fungus growth, splintered and crashed to earth. More showers of seeds fell, and new seedlings opened their spiky needles to the light. At times the earth shook and rumbled. In the distant mountains to the east a roar of steam and smoke darkened the sun by day and a flickering glare lighted the sky by night. Primitive red men hunted the deer. They passed silently as the years through the moss-carpeted forests. Gazing quietly at the mammoth trees about them, they beckoned, motioned, moved swiftly on down the trail.

In distant lands across the eastern ocean, in Portugal, in Italy, in Spain, swarthy adventurous men grew restless. A tough Portuguese sailor named Diaz braved the monsters of the deep and sailed his high-decked little vessel past the lonely headlands of the south of Africa. A penniless Genoese named Columbus laid a plan before the feet of Isabella of Spain. Later he drove his pathetic ships through the desolate scud of the Atlantic to land awe-struck on the shores of the new world. Another Portuguese with the romantic name of Vasco da Gama sailed from Lisbon to the African island of Zanzibar and thence to the fabled India of the East.

Maddened with a lust for gold and jewels, the Spanish con-

queror Cortes struck deep into the feathered kingdom of the Aztecs. Dark, hawk-faced men with piercing eyes and black beards strode insolently through the columned halls of Montezuma, the Aztec king. In the vast continent to the south, Pizarro, with treachery and sword, pillaged the terraced lands of the Incas.

It was now two hundred years or more since the one little fir seed had broken through its brown cover and nurtured itself in the soft forest loam. The tree stood one hundred and eighty feet tall. The feathery, plume-like branches swayed in the wind; in the late afternoon the needles seemed crusted with bronze in the pale coppery light of the setting sun. Nothing disturbed the forest. The deer bedded deep in the sheltered glades; squirrels chattered and scampered about. At night, the owl ruffled his feathers and preened; then uttered his eerie cry and flew darkly through the trees.

In Mediterranean Italy there were other restless men. They probed deep into the wealth of the mind. Leonardo da Vinci, the solitary genius, turned in his work from the painting of "The Last Supper" to notions of siege engines and flying machines. Titian experimented in oils and painted his fabulous Renaissance women of the opulent contours and reddish gold hair. Michaelangelo hewed out his gigantic Biblical figures, and Lorenzo the Magnificent endowed the Medicis and Florence with wealth and power.

In the ponderous north, a German monk by the name of Martin Luther challenged successfully the intricate might of the Roman Catholic Church. On the English throne sat coarse, heavy-joweled Henry the Eighth who would cleave England from the Papacy forever. In the middle of the sixteenth century the melancholy Hapsburg emperor, Charles the Fifth, whose troubled reign over the hectic states of north central Europe left him gouty, abdicated to a monastery in the oak and chestnut forests north of the Tagus. Charles died there in 1558 and the greatness of the Holy Roman Empire died with him.

The years passed. The dominant might of human affairs went north to England. Shrewd, red-headed Elizabeth ruled the island. Her buckoes of the coast towns smashed the haughty ruff-necked Grantees of Spain and their much-blessed Armada in 1588. Spain, as a great power, was finished.

The welter of three hundred years had passed. Perhaps the

most incisive genius of the human race trudged the dirty mucky streets of Elizabethan London. William Shakespeare looked at men and women and wrote, "All the world's a stage." Later, perhaps when the rough boisterous jollity of Elizabeth's time waned into the doubts and disillusionments of James the First's, he said of human life, "It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury; signifying nothing."

In the fir-crested mountains of the north Pacific coast of the new world, little had changed. The forest still stood primeval. The seasons passed. The mists blew in from the sea and clung streamer-like in the valleys. Winter brought hoar-frost to glisten in iridescent kiosques on the ferns; some mornings, the snow-flakes drifted silently to earth to melt in the noon-day sun. The fir tree which had opened its needles to the light three centuries before now looked regal, majestic. Its heavy brown bark was covered at the base with curling green moss. Streamers of moss hung from the stubby upper branches.

On the eastern shore of America, the Mayflower dropped anchor. Stern-visaged men with big black hats walked slowly to town meeting in the strong-willed, Puritan Massachusetts Bay Colony. In England, Puritan and Cavalier massed their swelling antagonisms, and Cromwell, a hammer-minded country squire with a wart on his face, raised his troops of "Ironsides." They smashed the power of Cavalier King Charles from Marston Moor to Naseby.

In the middle of the seventeenth century the Protestant King of Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus, was killed in the Thirty Years War which ended in the Peace of Westphalia. By this peace the Hohenzollern Elector of Brandenburg acquired territory which later became part of the Kingdom of Prussia. In France, the Sun King, Louis the Fourteenth, came to reign. He loved flattery and splendor. Versailles, with its fountains, its mirrors, its corridors, became the wonder and envy of the world. Amidst the mirrors and Aubusson tapestries of the Palaces strutted a simpering crew of dainty gentlemen. They used perfume, wore vast powdered wigs, silks, laces. Even more bizarre were their women with toy houses in their piled up coiffures. They wore great expanses of silk and satin supported by wire framework.

Time went on and the Hohenzollern family which ruled Prussia gave auspicious birth to Frederick the Great. Prussia became a

strong and mighty military monarchy with well-drilled armies and a sense of timing. In the grim empire of the Muscovites, Peter the Great and his brutal whimsies gave way to the glittering and exotic Catherine.

So the eighteenth century moved to a close. Men shrieked; men groaned; men slammed and struck one another in senseless wars. They killed and wrecked; and wherever they went, there was noise. Where the fir tree grew, it was quiet. There were storms, but they were of passing consequence. Gales blew in from the west; the winds roared at times and rattled the trunks of the old trees so that some of them fell, but not often. Sometimes lightning flashed and a mountain burned, but spring and the rains brought the green again. The natural world was quiet, serene. It moved in dignity and grace.

On a village square in Lexington, Massachusetts, homespun Continentals met the red-coated armed might of the British Empire. Some years later the English general, Cornwallis, surrendered. A large aristocratic-looking gentleman who had trouble with his teeth took memorable leave of his army. He went home to Mt. Vernon in Virginia.

In France toward the end of the eighteenth century, a frilled and flounced darling from the Court of Austria named Marie Antoinette told starving people to eat cake if they had no bread. She lost her lovely head. Likewise did revolutionary Robespierre, "the sea-green impenetrable." The Revolution passed and from its blood and smoke arose the melancholy Corsican, Napoleon. Europe rang once more with the din of arms; the Eagles of the French Empire soared and hovered over Wagram, Marengo, and Austerlitz. Off the Cape of Trafalgar in Spain, a gentle-mannered man named Nelson had a message sent up to the masthead of his flagship, the Victory, "England expects every man to do his duty." Later the guns thundered at Waterloo, and Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington, tapped his teacup impatiently and waited for the Prussian, Blücher, to arrive. Napoleon passed to oblivion amid the screaming gulls of the island of St. Helena.

The fir tree on the western slopes of the great mountains of the Pacific Northwest was now five hundred years old. It still put out little bright green shoots each spring; the topmost needles now reached over two hundred feet from the ground. The trunk

was better than six feet in diameter at the base. And, it had a name. The Scottish botanist, David Douglas, had seen the great giants of the north Pacific rain-forests in the early nineteenth century. Posterity was to honor him in the Douglas fir.

But things were happening in the forest country. The almost unbroken quiet of the ages was stirred. It was pierced by the crack of bull whips and the creak of ungreased axles in the immigrant trains as they lumbered into the Oregon country. A thick-set, round-shouldered man who smoked innumerable cigars had met a tall courtly southerner at Appomattox Courthouse in Virginia on April 9, 1865. The tide of empire was ever westward.

The Americans who drove relentlessly into the Oregon country were a hardy self-reliant lot. They looked one straight in the eye. But they were careless. They saw the immense forests sweeping away to the far horizons. They were intoxicated with a sense of limitless wealth.

A grandson of one of those gaunt determined men who crossed the alkali flats of the Great Plains in the Seventies walked through some of the Willamette National Forest in the summer of 1940. He had his girl with him and they built a campfire at the base of the slope where the fir tree grew. The tree was now six hundred years old. It rose to majestic height, was straight as a great arrow and magnificent as the pillar of a temple. The afternoon waned and as the setting sun threw long oblique shadows on the forest floor, the boy and girl picked up their things. They didn't bother much to put the fire out. They didn't dig it up and expose the embers; they just slopped a pail or two of water on the top. It smoldered on.

Three days later, on a hot dry afternoon, the fire roared up the hill. Humidity was low, the trees were tinder-dry, and a sudden wind had come up. The flames soared and leaped, fastened on the lower branches of smaller trees, then raced to the tops until the crowns blazed in a seething inferno of burning needles and pitch. The big old tree swayed and seemed to waver; other firs around it writhed and screamed in the merciless rage of the fire. The wind blew harder, the flames leaped higher and higher; the lower branches of the old fir caught. The flames spread upward; they curled along the outer limbs, and with one mighty blast, they spread furiously over the whole top.

The old tree smoked and smoldered for days . . . then stopped. Of its grandeur and majesty little remained save a charred, blackened snag. Six hundred years of beauty and sublimity and the heroic urge to live had gone. This one Douglas fir had lived through eras and dynasties and kingdoms. It had surpassed families and great names and the good and evil deeds of men. It had grown through centuries fraught with terror and hope and the cry of many men for the light. It stopped growing one summer afternoon. A youth and a girl were careless.

CHAPTER 4

*☛ If your mind is packed with
information, you'll lose much . . .
initial fear*

(How to put your talk together)

THAT WAS Goldfield in 1907. I used to drop into the Spahi, one of a number of establishments which were a combination of restaurant, bar and gambling house with a sort of cabaret feature. The man who dealt roulette on the night shift in the Spahi was named Frank Halley. He was a good-looking, affable chap who bore no resemblance to the professional gambler of fiction. He had a girl whom we all knew as Lady Stanford—a tall, handsome brunette in her late twenties who sang in the cabaret and made herself agreeable to the customers. For no particular reason except perhaps their good looks, the pair interested me. I once talked all evening with Lady Stanford but never learned anything about her except that she came from Philadelphia.

One of the Spahi's regular customers was a man named Philips. He was of medium height, possibly sixty years of age, well but quietly dressed and entirely inconspicuous until you looked into his eyes. They were pale blue and with a cold, steely quality. Every night he would come in for dinner, bow to Lady Stanford, say good evening to Halley, nod to an acquaintance or two and seat himself quietly at a small table not far from the roulette layout. After dinner he would just sit there smoking for a while and then leave.

Philips never drank and never gambled, and I used to wonder why he patronized the lively, noisy Spahi.

In time I got to know quite a few of the regular customers and employees of the place. If you sat alone, one of the gay ladies would be sure to come over for a smoke and a drink in the hope that you would stake her to a seat at either the blackjack or the roulette table. One such was a vivacious blonde. She had never been near Alaska, but for some obscure reason she went by the name of Klondike. Klondike and Lady Stanford were friends.

One night I strolled into the Spahi and noticed that another gambler had taken Frank Halley's place at the roulette table. I looked around. Lady Stanford was gone, too. Over at his customary table sat Philips, quiet, unobtrusive as ever. Then, after two or three days, Philips disappeared.

Shortly after this I had to go over to Tonopah for a week, and the night I came back I went to the Spahi for dinner. Klondike was standing alone near the door, so I asked her to join me. After dinner I happened to mention Lady Stanford and Halley, and Klondike told me this story:

Lady Stanford was Philips' wife. The daughter of a minister, she had been a schoolteacher. Philips, a retired grain merchant in Philadelphia, had married her in 1904. The marriage had been happy enough in its way, and he seemed to be contented with the cool affection she returned for his passionate devotion to her. She had been satisfied with the pleasant, if uneventful life in a Philadelphia suburb.

One night, after about a year of this, at a dance at the local country club she met Frank Halley, a successful young broker who was spending the week-end with friends. She danced with him twice and fell in love with him. He put off his return to town, and for the next week they managed to spend almost every afternoon together. And then one night Philips returned from his club in Philadelphia to find she had gone away with her lover.

Philips engaged two detectives, instructed them to spare no expense and resumed his normal life, apparently undisturbed by his wife's departure. Eight months went by, and one morning Philips had a telegram from his detectives—they had located the pair in Cripple Creek, Colorado.

Philips left for Cripple Creek. The detective who met him at

the train told him that Halley was working in a gambling house and that the couple were living at a certain small hotel. Philips walked over to the hotel, registered and went straight to Halley's room. He knocked, and Halley opened the door. The couple were dressing.

With a quiet word of greeting Philips entered and sat down on the bed. Mrs. Philips and Halley stood there speechless, Klondike said, staring at Philips.

Finally the husband said: "Well, I've found you. You needn't be frightened, either of you. I haven't come here to make trouble. You evidently love Frank more than you did me. I don't intend to divorce you. You are old enough to know your own mind. You have made your choice. But the choice must be permanent. I will see to it that it is. And as for you, Frank, if you ever leave her, I'll shoot you." With that he got up, bowed and left the room.

That night Philips appeared at the gambling house where Halley worked and sat for an hour or so watching the play. And the next night too, and so on for two ghastly weeks. Halley and the girl could stand it no longer, and early one morning they left for San Francisco. Philips left, too, and eventually he found them there. They packed again and skipped to Denver, where Halley located a job at the Navarre, a famous gambling club. Within a week Philips had discovered them, and one evening he walked into the Navarre, spoke courteously to each of them and sat down at a table.

Halley and the girl then left for Goldfield. Philips followed and, when Halley had established himself at the Spahi, became a regular visitor at the place. . . .

Several years later I made a trip to Mexico City. One evening I was being taken around the town by some friends and we visited the Club Politico, a high-class night club and gambling place. Someone suggested that we have a go at roulette.

Just as we began to play, a new croupier came on, and as he took his place at the wheel, I looked up and recognized Frank Halley. . . . Then I saw Lady Standford sitting in a corner. . . . She was talking to a man. I remembered his eyes. It was Philips!*

Every year in the United States overburdened postmen carry

* John Baragwanath, "Pay Streak," *Hearst's International-Cosmopolitan*, October, 1936. Reprinted by special permission of the author.

almost half a billion letters written by lovelorn men and women who register with matrimonial bureaus. Four hundred or more of these marriage clubs flourish and their Mississippi-flood of correspondence—obviously related in some aspect to love—is only a small part of the total yearly inundation of this kind of mail. A lonely Wisconsin farm girl writes to a garage mechanic in Trenton, New Jersey, whose name and picture she has received from a matrimonial club. With naive disclosure she tells of the farm she owns, the fourteen thousand dollars she has in the bank, and her two hunting dogs, Rex and Pudge. She hastens to assure the gentleman of gears and crankshafts that although she is only five feet, two inches tall and weighs 135 pounds, she is just “well built” and not in any sense fat. A gentleman in California lets it be known that he would like to lead a southern girl to the altar. Thirteen thousand women from the land of magnolias and candied yams answer this romantic appeal. The youngest aspirant is eleven. The oldest, a woman whose particular offering is a rich maturity, is one hundred and three. In a Colorado mining town a young man from Kansas City arrives to spend a few days with his betrothed. The girl is delighted; her family pleased. At three o'clock in the morning, two days before the wedding, the correspondence bridegroom loads the family valuables into a truck, opens a wall safe with an acetylene torch and disappears—permanently.

People are overwhelmingly interested in love. Whatever the word means and it covers a multiplicity of situations, some of them peculiar, it has the same siren call as money. No one has to be told that love is often the chief fare offered by the magazines, newspapers and books. The listening public as well as the reading public never tires of it. One newspaper love consultant is asked to advise a young married woman. She says her husband keeps telling her to go to hell. Would the court agree that she take the children? A kindly gentleman of fifty is in love with a woman who already has a husband. What would be the quickest and most

humane way to dispose of this obstacle? A stickler for propriety, rare in these times, inquires if it is proper for a girl to help a man on with his overcoat while spending a week-end with him at Atlantic City.

And so it goes. The dramatic and perhaps foolish decision made by Lady Stanford in the above quotation is duplicated in one form or another thousands of times daily. Even our gruff men of war make newspaper headlines with their amorous whimsies.

Since the author of this book was formerly a lecturer for both the U. S. Forest and National Park Services, it is perhaps natural that an occasional talk from that experience should be introduced. The following address, called "Jones' Harbor," also prepared as a fire-prevention talk for the Forest Service, was built around a conventional type of American love story. It is offered here as an illustration of what can be done in one direction with the use of this fundamental appeal:

JONES' HARBOR

About forty years ago, a man by the name of George Roberts came west from Lincoln, Nebraska, and met and married Edith Johnson in LaGrande, Oregon. George's father had had a hardware store in Lincoln and George had worked there for a while. Then he grew restless with the flat cornlands of the middle west. The summers seemed to get hotter and hotter, and George longed for the cool mountains and the tall timber of the Pacific Coast.

He traveled for a while with a wholesale hardware concern on the Coast. That's how he met Edith. She was the daughter of old man Johnson, one of his customers. George used to go out there for dinners. Well, after the first time or two, George and Edith got to washing and drying the dishes together. You know what that leads to. Yes, they fell in love and got married. George took his bride to a prosperous milling and shipping town on the Oregon coast which we will call "Jones' Harbor." There, George opened a moderate-sized hardware store of his own. He had some money and his bachelor uncle, Wilbur, back in Chadron, Nebraska, happened to die at the right time. He got ten thousand more.

Jones' Harbor was a nice place. It was a town of about ten

thousand people, most of them what is called "good American stock." You know the kind. They went to church and probably were Congregationalists or Baptists or Methodists. They took a bath on Saturday night and had a picture of Niagara Falls above the settee in the living room. The father was still the head of the family in those days and there were none of these new-fangled ideas about letting children have their own way. The boys got spanked and the girls had to help with the cooking. The fathers and mothers believed in America as the land of opportunity; they loved to read about Andrew Carnegie and American business men. Here, they thought, was a land of untold wealth that would last forever.

Many of the people of Jones' Harbor owned their homes. It was that kind of a place. The neighbors were stable, respectable people; not fly-by-nighters. Many of the homes located high on the hills overlooking the ocean and the harbor were pretty. They were neatly painted white; had roses and zinnias and rhododendrons in the gardens and picket fences along the front.

George and Edith felt the same way about a home. They wanted to own one. They wanted children and a garden, and somehow children and flowers grow better around a home that is owned. So after a couple of years had passed and George's hardware store on Main Street began to prosper and do a nice business, they built a house.

It cost more than they intended—around eight thousand dollars—but it was worth it. It was modeled after an old colonial home in Concord, Massachusetts. It had two stories with four bedrooms, and in the big living room there was a stone fireplace. A sunny kitchen looked out on blue forested hills. One of the downstairs rooms, paneled in knotty pine, served as a den for George. The yard, inside a picket fence, had a lilac tree and sweet William grew along the walk.

They weren't in the new house very long when Charlie Cummings, who had the drug store across from the depot, came running into George's hardware store one day and told George he'd better get on up to the Masonic Hospital. Edith was having their first baby.

Well, it was just a baby and there have been lots of them born and I think statistics show that on that same day when George's baby arrived, there were five thousand seven hundred and fifty-seven other babies born, but of course, George thought there never had been one just like this. I guess there hadn't, either.

They named the chubby mite Isabelle. She was a cute tot with blue eyes and brown curly hair. In a couple of years they had another. They named him Kenneth. George had a bit of hard sledding after Kenneth arrived. One of the big lumber mills, the Hanson and Dockstader Company, which employed six hundred and fifty men, closed up for several months. George's business was hit, but Henry Dockstader got a loan from a Portland bank and once more the saws started to turn.

Time went on. The rhododendrons and lilacs bloomed each year. The children went to school; Isabelle entered the fifth grade and started her piano lessons. Kenneth was in the second grade. A little difficult to handle, he was always pulling cats' tails and throwing water in the bathroom when he washed—if he did. He took his coaster wagon down the big hill one day and knocked out two of his front teeth. It didn't bother him much.

George and Edith were happy. They lived a fine sort of life—truly American. You could in Jones' Harbor. The town grew and prospered. As eastern capitalists saw rich opportunities for profits in lumber, more mills came in. In every direction the mountains rang with the scream of donkey engines and the cries of men getting the timber. The waters of the harbor lay heavy with huge brown Douglas fir logs, grown in the nearby hills through the hundreds of years.

As the years passed, pleasantly, George's business grew along with the town. He rented the space next door which had belonged to the fruit market and more than doubled his stock. One year he was president of the Jones' Harbor Chamber of Commerce. At one of these meetings a Mr. Baggot of the United States Forest Service talked to them. He praised the people and the town of Jones' Harbor. He said it was a monument to American business enterprise. The men all stood up and applauded. They liked that.

But then Mr. Baggot said things they didn't like. He told the men of Jones' Harbor they were cutting the timber six times faster than it could grow. At that rate, the timber industries of the town would be bankrupt in twenty years. He warned them of the fire menace; said all logging operations were conducted too carelessly in the woods. They didn't like that—not a bit.

George saw Henry Dockstader that afternoon and asked him what he thought. Henry said, "What if we are cutting it fast?"

We're making money, aren't we?" George then asked Charlie Dow of the Dow Mill and Planning Company. Charlie laughed and said, "Why, George, we've got Douglas fir growing all the way from Jones' Harbor to Alaska. This is America. The timber is never going to give out. Don't pay any attention to him." Duke Marsden of the shingle mill said, "Why be bothered about a fire now and then. They come in the summer. Don't worry, we've got plenty of timber and always will have." So George went home and ate his dinner and everything seemed secure and right.

More years passed. Edith had all any woman could want, with a beautiful home, two fine children and a devoted husband who worked hard. In the town below, the saws whined in the mills; log rafts choked the harbor and left little room for the big freighters from Japan and South America. The First National Bank of Jones' Harbor handled more money than any bank in the State outside of Portland. Big men from the east stayed at the Douglas Hotel in town.

Well, that was in 1927. Isabelle was a sophomore then at the University; Kenneth was high-ranking man on the High School basketball team. George and Edith took a trip east, first to Lincoln, Nebraska, and on to Scranton, Pennsylvania, and New York. Then something happened.

Charlie Dow closed down the Dow Mill and Planning Company. He said he couldn't operate any more. The haulage costs on logs to his mill ate up all the profit; the timber was now too far away. Three hundred and seventy-five men were out of a job. The people just couldn't understand it, and that winter some of the kids in town were hungry. The following summer, a fire started in the Dockstader logging operations. It didn't burn very fast; the weather was foggy, and they didn't do a whole lot about it. It kept on burning. Then they had some hot, dry days and a gale swept in from the northwest.

There's no use to go into details. The fire raged for two weeks and three days, then quit. It burned through one hundred and seventy-five thousand acres of old growth Douglas fir. The fire cost Hanson and Dockstader eighty thousand dollars in lost equipment and damage claims. Henry Dockstader went to California to live with his son. He was cleaned out.

After that, the town was finished. There were a thousand men

out of work. Housewives ranged the streets clinging to bewildered children. Alarm spread. People started to move away. Some of the other mills closed.

During those days, George Roberts nearly lost his mind. He wouldn't eat dinner at night; just paced up and down the living room smoking cigars. The panic-stricken townspeople started a run on the First National Bank. Bill Holman, the vice-president, even came out on the sidewalk and pleaded with them. It didn't do any good. The bank paid for three days; then closed its doors. One month after the bank failed, George Roberts lost his store. He tried to get a mortgage on his home. He couldn't get anything; property values had fallen fifty-five per cent in ten months.

There were broken families, lost homes, lost savings, and ruined businesses. A dream had broken and nothing could be done. There was not enough timber left. The fire wasn't everything. That was bad but they could have managed in spite of it. But—they had cut, and cut, and cut—and thought it would last forever. There was timber left, but it was many miles from Jones' Harbor. By 1935 the town was bankrupt, broken, and through. The mills rotted and fell into the bay or gathered cob-webs in the afternoon sun.

George and Edith Roberts still have their home, but they don't live there any more. George, at sixty-two, had to start all over again. He got a little job selling paints and varnishes through Oregon and Washington. He walks with a slump now; seems to have a far-away look in his eye. People feel sorry for him. Edith weeps now and then when George isn't around. She's brave, as women are, but it's all pretty depressing. Everything is gone. Isabelle, naturally, came home from college. Kenneth never got there. None of them has ever been back to Jones' Harbor. A fisherman and his eight children live in the house. The yard is all weeds; the north window in Edith's bedroom is broken and stuffed with rags. The picket fence has disappeared.

Well, this is the story of George and Edith Roberts and Jones' Harbor. It isn't far-fetched; it isn't unusual. Both Washington and Oregon have towns that have gone the same way. It has happened; it is happening now. In fifteen or twenty years it will be the story of other towns in the state's timbered regions if this present boom psychology with its senseless, destructive cutting of the forests continues.

At present, we are cutting faster than the forests grow. We permit too many mills to come in from outside. We permit too much uncontrolled, unsupervised logging to destroy our resources for the future. Unless the citizens of Oregon see that these present practices are curtailed, and curtailed now, there is the same tragic bankruptcy ahead.

It isn't often that a speaker can weave an entire talk around a story like this one related in "Jones' Harbor." However, allusions to the women in men's lives can often be made within the body of a talk. This sort of thing always absorbs attention. Few extended newspaper or magazine articles written about personalities of this or an older day fail to include something of the distaff side. Numerous books are published every year on the women in Lincoln's life, in Byron's life, in Henry VIII's life and the lives of hundreds of other men. As a fundamental appeal for attention, tales of love are as constant as the stars.

In going through this book, sooner or later the reader will come to the conclusion that successful public speaking is a lot of work.

It is.

Strong emphasis has been placed upon the necessity of knowing what audiences are interested in. Additional emphasis has highlighted the importance of a good beginning. Concrete words have been shown to be indispensable. Then, there is something else that must have considerable time and thought—the collection of speech materials.

It may be stated here that unless you enjoy reading—unless you enjoy expanding your mind by digging around in books and libraries—you'll never become much of a public speaker. Why? Because, frankly, you'll never be prepared. You'll never be ready. You'll never lose the fright and paralysis that grips the well intentioned but inadequate speaker.

If most of your spare time is spent reading nothing but the sport page of the newspaper, listening to radio serial programs,

don't bother with public speaking. If the highest boost you can give your imagination is a contemplation of Roy Rogers' subtleties at a Saturday-night movie, the public platform is just not for you. Or, if you are a woman and your conversation is chiefly gossip and clothes, retire gracefully from any delusions about intriguing an audience.

Public speaking is not a long-hair subject. It isn't the domain of those who munch Plato and ruminate on astrophysics. It is, however, a subject for the intelligent. It requires an inquisitive and acquisitive mind. It takes imagination, resourcefulness, and originality.

The average American is certainly not too stupid to give a good public talk. Often he is too ignorant. He knows too little about people. He knows too little about his subject. He has not cultivated the mental habit to think objectively about either.

To collect material for your talk, you must take notes. You must take plenty of notes—far more than you will ever use in any one talk. Why? Chiefly, so that you will have plenty of material to choose from. Usually the more notes you have—within reasonable limits—the better it will be for your performance.

Knowing as much as possible about any subject will give a speaker an amazing sense of assurance on the platform. It will do more than anything else to allay that tormenting fear of forgetting or of not being able to continue. If your mind is packed with information, you'll lose much of this initial fear.

How do you take notes?

The first step is to gain a little practical knowledge of library card catalogues and magazine indexes. Consult your librarian. The system of cataloguing books is uniform in all libraries; and once you know something of it, you'll have little trouble in finding books on any subject.

Also, talk to your librarian about the various magazine and newspaper indexes. The most important one for you and one which you will use constantly is the *Reader's Guide to Periodical*

Literature. This index is the public speaker's Bible because it will give you more current information on any subject than almost any other source. Whether your talk is to be on the duck-billed platypus or recent developments in the production of ferro-manganese steel, consult the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*. You cannot get along without it!

Now, let us say that you want to address an audience on the subject of the Centralia mine disaster of 1947. By looking under the appropriate headings in the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*, you will find that John Bartlow Martin had an article entitled "The Blast in Centralia No. 5" in the March, 1948, issue of *Harper's Magazine*. Other articles on the same subject are listed, but for our purpose at the moment, let us consider just this one. Here is a paragraph from Mr. Martin's article:

A half mile away, beyond the tipple and the barren gray fields, a locomotive is coming up the grade from Centralia, blowing steam hard, pulling forty-eight cars of coal, cars of the CB&Q and the Pennsy, the Lehigh Valley and the IC. Just across the highway is the Hillcrest Memorial Cemetery, with so many new graves on the gentle sloping hill, the words in granite: "March 25, 1947. At Rest." And in a saloon in a neighboring town a young miner is having a beer, his hair neatly combed, his sport jacket of latest cut. "I got a wife and one kid. It takes a lot of money to raise kids. Where else could I make thirteen-o-five a day? The railroads pay eight, nine dollars. And that's all there is around here." At a table in a corner a couple of old miners are arguing quietly, and behind the bar the lady bartender is listening sympathetically to a lady customer whose husband is always crabbing about what she cooks. The young miner says, "Sometimes I'd like to leave for good. But where'd I go? I don't know anything else. I don't like mining. It's not really life," and he laughed shortly. "I don't know what in hell you would call it. Well, it is life, in a way, too. I just wish my life away, when I go below I just wish it was tomorrow. Wish my life away. And I guess the others are the same way, too." *

* Copyright, 1948, by The Reader's Digest.

What would you do to get down some notes on the above paragraph?

Methods of note taking vary. They depend upon an individual's habits and way of thinking. *However, notes should be accurate, complete, understandable, and brief.* Some people like to put them on cards; others put them on sheets of paper of uniform size. *Notes must always be clearly and accurately identified.* You must know the source of any information. You might be questioned as to this. Get into the habit of identifying notes from magazine articles by putting this kind of practical notation at the top of your page or card:

John Bartlow Martin
"The Blast in Centralia No. 5"
Harper's Magazine
March, 1948.

If the author of the article is not given, begin the notation with the title in quotation marks:

"Apple Duck's Travail"
Time
January 21, 1946.

If your material is from a book, put a similar notation at the top of your page or card:

Gene Fowler
Good Night, Sweet Prince
The Viking Press
New York, 1944.

Notice that the titles of magazine articles are set in quotation marks. Book and magazine titles are underlined.

Now, in the preparation of a talk on the Centralia mine disaster, what is there of value to a speaker in the quoted paragraph? Are there any possibilities, for instance, of a good beginning?

Yes. Since people are always interested in people, the statement of the young miner would be excellent to take down. Ordinarily, in taking notes, you would not copy things word for word, but this statement is particularly good and you can use it or a part of it to lead into your discussion. Take down the whole thing and put it in quotation marks. Make doubly sure to copy it accurately. Then, unless you find something in subsequent material which you think is better, you can start your talk in one of several ways. If you wish to startle the audience a bit and make them sit up quickly, try this:

"'It's not really life. . . . I don't know what in hell you would call it.'"

"This was the cynical pronouncement made one evening upon coal mining by a young miner who sat thinking about the hard, dangerous way he made his living.

"He continued by saying: 'Well, it is life, in a way, too. I just wish my life away, when I go below I just wish it was tomorrow. Wish my life away. And I guess the others are the same way.'

"These remarks were quoted by John Bartlow Martin in his *Harper's Magazine* article on the Centralia mine disaster. They illustrate a kind of fatalism generally held by men whose daily existence is not enhanced by the memory of frequent disasters in the past."

This talk could be continued by a short discussion of sudden death in the coal industry and the causes of this chronic mortality. After this, a longer and detailed discussion of what happened in Centralia No. 5 would follow naturally.

Or you can use the first part of the miner's statement and begin your talk in this way:

"When you pick up your daily newspaper and read of another explosion in a coal mine, you may be moved to ask, 'Why does a man ever become a coal miner? Why does he stay with it?'

"Well—why does he?

"Let's ask one of them. In the March, 1948, issue of *Harper's*

Magazine, John Bartlow Martin quotes a young miner in an article on the Centralia disaster. Obviously, he had been asked these questions. He said, 'I got a wife and one kid. It takes a lot of money to raise kids. Where else could I make thirteen-o-five a day?' And then in answer to why he would stay with it, he said, 'Sometimes I'd like to leave for good. But where'd I go? I don't know anything else.'

"The answers given by this young miner are the universal answers as to why men everywhere go into, and stay with, hard, dangerous work. They have a wife and kids. They don't know anything else.

"Since coal has to be mined and men have to do it, it would seem that some inquiry into these recurrent disasters which massacre large numbers of miners would be a primary obligation of society."

For practical note taking, try to condense the material in any paragraph into a single sentence. Since books and magazines are expanded—filled in with human-interest material to make them readable—it is usually easy to take down the essential meaning of any paragraph in this way. Let's look at this quotation from an article on housing:

On the surface it is a mystery why builders, real-estate men, and materials suppliers should spend so much time and money to defeat a housing program. There are two explanations. The construction of houses costing less than \$10,000 is not very alluring to men excited by the smell of big profits. And a low-cost housing boom would dent and perhaps wreck some very profitable business in lumber and other conventional construction material—since builders would have to find cheaper substitutes. The needed substitutes are already appearing, too. Henry Kaiser testified before the House Banking and Currency Committee that he was using waste lumber and aluminum in his housing developments and that they were working out just as well as lumber. Kaiser said significantly, "The lumber boys had better get the wood out of the forests, or they'll find themselves out of business." Representative Patman has in his office samples of new building materials made of cotton burrs, formed ply-

wood, palmetto, and aluminum. Use of these would cut a lot of the gravy out of the materials and lumber business.*

What is the essential meaning of this paragraph? Isn't it something like this: "Since a low-cost housing program with the introduction of substitute building materials would wreck high profits to be made on conventional construction, real-estate men and materials suppliers have spent time and money to defeat this measure."

However, if your notes consist of only the bare essentials indicated in the above sentence, you may have nothing but abstractions and statistics for your talk. Can we express this paragraph on housing in a single sentence and yet include more concrete detail?

Since a less than \$10,000-per-unit housing program made possible by substitute materials—cotton burs, plywood, palmetto, aluminum—would wreck the high profits of the conventional builders, real-estate men and materials suppliers spent time and money to defeat this measure.

Sometimes a paragraph is so cluttered with detail it is difficult to know just which items to select. That is pretty much the case with the following quotation about the super-Republican, Kenneth Wherry:

In real life (politics being a fantasy), Kenneth Wherry is an amazingly successful and versatile salesman. He is a partner of Wherry Brothers, of Pawnee City, Nebraska, which sells farm implements and machinery, hardware, furniture and automobiles. He has also been engaged in selling livestock and farms. For the past 25 years he has been a licensed embalmer and funeral director. Senator Guffey of Pennsylvania, referring to this talent of Wherry's, described him in this tender phrase, "The tri-state mortician." In the days before he was so busy organizing the world, Wherry was president of the Pawnee County Agricultural Society, an active Presbyterian and a vigorous Kiwanian. He

* Tris Coffin, "The Slickest Lobby," *The Nation*, March 23, 1946. Reprinted by permission of The Nation Associates, Inc.

became an energetic and loyal party wheel horse early in life. Being a Republican was as important as being a good church member and Kiwanian. His first office was city councilman, then Mayor of Pawnee City.*

In putting the essence of this paragraph into a single sentence, it would seem that there are certain things to emphasize. Kenneth Wherry is versatile; he has tremendous energy; he has a genius for being conventional, for belonging to accepted and conservative organizations. This sentence may express what we want:

Kenneth Wherry, "the tri-state mortician," who has had amazing business success with funerals, furniture, livestock, automobiles, and real estate, has displayed the same drive and energy as president of the Pawnee County Agricultural Society, member of the Kiwanis Club, the Presbyterian Church, wheel horse of the Republican party, and mayor of Pawnee City, Nebraska.

It would be possible to make the sentence shorter and leave out most of the concrete items, but you want and need concrete material in the preparation of a talk. Often what seem like insignificant items are important for the creation of a picture in the listener's mind.

In the everlasting search for material to catch the attention of your audience, never neglect the historical background of *any* subject. How many people would care to listen to a talk on the laundry business? Almost no one in a general audience. And yet, here is a paragraph from an article on the origin of the American hotel. It gives an interesting and amusing historical perspective on laundry and clean linen in the early days of the Republic. Almost anyone would listen to it attentively:

Not only did the house have no bath, but it had no facilities of any kind for washing the hands and face. A guest that par-

* Tris Coffin, "Everybody's Always Talking About Taft," *The New Republic*, December 16, 1946. Reprinted by permission of Editorial Publications, Inc.

ticular about his appearance was expected to use the common pump in the carriage yard. Nor did the traveler as a rule find a clean bed awaiting him. In the better taverns the linen was changed fortnightly, or once every three weeks, but at the average roadside inn it was laundered only as often as the landlord's economical soul would allow. If the traveler asked for a change of bed-clothing, he was more likely than not to be denounced by his host as a damned aristocrat too good to sleep between sheets that had already covered many a loyal republican every bit as good as he. For this was right after the Revolution, and practically every innkeeper, it seems, was an ardent republican who did his best to keep the flames of hatred for the British and the Loyalists burning brightly.*

The purpose of note taking, of course, is to provide the speaker with the ingredients for a talk. He should have a large stock of these ingredients so that he can select the best items for his particular purpose. In beginning the research work for any subject the notes will necessarily be longer and more complete. After the first few magazine articles or a certain amount of book material, you will begin to run into paragraphs and parts of paragraphs containing information which you already have.

Obviously there is no point in repeating notes. Many of your note sentences will not be as long or as complete as the single sentences shown in these examples.

The stout conditions under which our wayfaring forefathers slept are compounded here in another complete sentence:

In unwashed, unbathed, post-Revolutionary America, where, in the better establishments, innkeepers had bed linen laundered every two or three weeks, a fastidious traveler was usually denounced as a damned aristocrat and perhaps pro-British if he objected to sheets which had already covered many a good republican.

How many of these single-sentence notes should you have on

* Mauritz Hallgren, "How America's Hotels Grew Up," *Travel*, November, 1941.

one card or one piece of paper? That is largely a matter of your own judgment, but don't have cards or pages so cluttered with notes that you are confused.

Classify your notes under heads and subheads. For instance, if you wanted to give a talk on dairy cattle, logical heads would be "Jersey," "Guernsey," "Holstein," "Brown Swiss." A logical subhead would be "Milk Production." Consequently, if you were reading some material on Jersey milk production, put the head and subhead at the top of the card along with the notation as to the source of information. Then, when you compose your talk, you can assemble all the cards or sheets with "Jersey—Milk Production" at the top and have a comparatively easy time writing your remarks for that specific subject.

If you wanted to address an audience on the subject of the brokerage and investment business in the United States, you might take the actual names of a few of the large brokerage houses as your heads. Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Beane would certainly be one of them. You might want to discuss, in one part of your talk, the measures taken by various firms to establish and maintain customer confidence. That might very well be a subhead—"Customer Confidence."

Accordingly, under the head of "Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Beane" and the subhead "Customer Confidence," you would take down a note from a paragraph such as this:

Was the customer worried about the self-interest of the firm in a security it recommended, sold or analyzed? Then the firm would publicly and voluntarily state its own position in any such security or company. "I am convinced," Merrill said, "there is nothing in the world that clears the atmosphere faster than a complete disclosure of your position. If we should prepare a pamphlet on the Kresge Company, we will say we have attempted to get figures together in the most scientific and impartial manner that we know how, but we are only human beings. We will state that Mr. Merrill has been identified with this company since 1921. He has seen it grow from earning four hundred thousand dollars

a year to over eleven million. He is not impartial about the Kresge Company. He is a partisan of the Kresge Company. He believes in it completely, although he may be wrong. And finally, we'll tell our clients that the total holdings of the general partners of this firm, including Mr. Merrill, are so many thousand shares."^{*}

This paragraph is long and detailed—perhaps too long to express in one sentence if you wanted to catch everything. However, your sentence might look something like this:

Since Mr. Merrill believes in frank disclosure of the broker's special interest in any firm or security, Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Beane might prepare a pamphlet on the Kresge Company, tell that Mr. Merrill had been identified with this company since 1921, say that he had seen its earnings rise from \$400,000 a year to over \$11,000,000, mention that Mr. Merrill was not impartial about Kresge and that Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Beane together owned so many thousand shares.

If it is easier to put your note information from a detailed paragraph into two sentences, do it. Also, sometimes you can condense material from two or even three paragraphs and express what you want in a sentence. After all—what you put down in a note or in notes is determined by the purpose and scope of your talk. If you wish to give a twenty-minute luncheon address on credit losses in the dry-goods business, it would be foolish to take notes on every paragraph in an article which discussed not only credit losses but also employee management, a novel pension plan, and advertising. Often a long article on the experiences of one large store would contain such varied subjects.

Someone may ask: If I have been an advertising man, an associate of the district attorney, or the proprietor of a commercial quail farm for twenty years, why should I look up material if asked to talk on my business?

You should look up material for the same reason an advertising

^{*} Arthur W. Baum, "The Thundering Herd of Wall Street," *The Saturday Evening Post*, January 10, 1948. Copyright, 1948, by The Curtis Publishing Co. Reprinted by special permission.

man eagerly scans the product of every rival agency, for the same reason that lawyers read and study thousands of cases other than their own, for the same reason that any commercial fancier of wild game would observe the methods and results of other breeders.

You need to look up material to get new ideas, to get twists, angles, illustrations, examples for humorous bits. You never know too much about any subject; most people don't know enough. You need to look up material to enlarge your thinking, stimulate your imagination, contribute to your originality.

Furthermore, by reading of the experiences and opinions of other people in the same field, you often gain indispensable help in wording and phrasing your ideas. Books and magazines are written, usually, by professionals. Notice how they say things, how they create reader interest.

A man may have been a lawyer for a long time, but law isn't just a matter of the police courts and judges' chambers in Milwaukee or Baltimore. Law and the efforts of society to adjust to it or resist it embrace all the peoples of the earth. The February, 1939, issue of *Travel* magazine carried an article by Aleko Lilius entitled "Policing a Desert by Camel." It had much to do with law and it is another example of the kind of interesting supplementary information one can find by digging around in books and magazines. A public talk on some aspect of law could be supported or illustrated with an item or two from this article, a paragraph of which is reprinted here:

The Bushmen of the Kalahari have always been hard to tame. For hundreds, if not thousands, of years, they have been roaming about the desert, hunting its game and knowing no restrictions, no law but that of "the survival of the fittest"—which in these days, more often than not, conflicts with the white man's idea of right and wrong. If, in the past the little, yellow man used his poisoned arrow to exterminate a hated rival either for the favors of his humped-buttocked woman, the right to hunt in a particular region, or for the possession of a water hole, it was

perfectly all right with the rest of the world. After the advent of the white man the native was told that to kill another human being was a crime for which he would be hanged. When he persisted in doing as he pleased in his desert, he was invariably caught and punished. It took him a long time to realize that to steal sheep or to appropriate anything that did not belong to him was also a crime for which he . . . would be hunted by the police until captured and then severely dealt with. *

What do you do with your notes after you get them? Sort them. Spread them out and put all the material pertaining to any one subject together. Then, since your first task is to get a good beginning for your talk, ask yourself: "What is the most interesting thing I have in all my note material? What is the most spectacular? What is there of adventure? Of drama? What is there of human nature?"

Select the item which you think will have immediate appeal. Select the situation or story which you think will be infallible in getting audience attention. Your beginning doesn't have to be sensational. You may wish to open quietly. That's all right, but it must embody one of the fundamental appeals for attention.

Spend plenty of time and thought on this beginning. It is *very important*.

With a beginning selected, how do you put the rest of a talk together? Your talk may be topical in nature. By this is meant that your material falls naturally into topical divisions none of which takes any special precedence over another. For instance, here is the first part of an introductory talk on meteorology given during World War II:

If Dr. James Monroe Smith, ex-president of Louisiana State University, had paid more attention to meteorology than he did to the elusive movements of the grain market, he wouldn't have a number on his shirt today and he wouldn't be scraping his beans off of a graniteware saucer.

Sometime in 1939, Dr. Smith apparently found his life as

* By permission of *Travel* magazine, copyright, 1939.

Louisiana's No. 1 educator neither exciting nor profitable. He undertook to do something about it. He sampled the funds of the university quite liberally and managed to dish out enough money to buy himself two million bushels of wheat which he intended to hold for a fat price on a rising market. Unfortunately for the learned man's dreams of easy money, the spring of 1939 was destined to have ample rainfall and a bumper crop was assured in the wheat country.

Had Dr. Smith consulted the man who directs the weather service at the California Institute of Technology, he would have learned that good rains had been predicted for the wheat belt. He might also have learned that the predictions of the Cal Tech weather department are seldom wrong. Consequently, Dr. Smith might have remained honest or at least he could have postponed the hazardous venture which ended abruptly in the hoosegow.

In at least this one respect, the fabulous gentlemen who operate the large Hollywood studios are more cagey than Dr. Smith. They have learned enough about weather and its effect upon a profit-and-loss statement to maintain a 24-hour teletype service with a commercial weather-forecasting agency. A major studio with several picture units on location may be risking as much as fifty thousand dollars a day. Obviously, the men who run it want to know beforehand whether or not it is going to rain. Extras, innumerable properties, and costumes cost fortunes, and no studio wishes to schedule location shots if rainy weather is due.

Hence, the picture people keep in constant touch with weather forecasters who will give them short or long range forecasts as to what is liable to happen. Studios are interested not only in rain, but they want to know if any high winds are due which might cause an overloud rustling of nearby leaves or a crackling of tree branches. During the filming of "Gone with the Wind," the studio concerned wanted a very special kind of night for the shooting of the burning of Atlanta. They wanted no wind or at best a very light one, a sufficiently low temperature to discourage fire danger, and they wanted high relative humidity. They were going to have a major fire on their hands in the studio, and they certainly wanted no trouble in controlling it.

Even football teams are becoming interested in meteorology. They want to know what the weather is going to be like when they play at Chicago's Soldier's Field or the Yale Bowl or the

Stadium at Southern California. They don't want to practice a dry field technique and then land at South Bend, Indiana, to find the football field an oozy morass of slippery mud. In 1938, the Southern California football team based their preparation tactics on a commercial weather service's forecast that dry, clear days would prevail during an invasion of campuses in Washington and Oregon. Often there is rain and dark weather in the Pacific northwest during the pigskin season, but the Trojans banked on this forecast to the contrary and everything was lovely.

Yacht racers are a push-over for a reliable weather forecast service. In the Pacific Yacht Race for 1939—San Francisco to Honolulu—the owners of the Fandango knew that their craft was heavy and that it performed well only in a good stiff breeze. They consulted the man who conducts the department of meteorology at Cal Tech, and he gave them a carefully worked-out wind chart to follow. When the entire racing fleet stalled in a dead calm, the Fandango's skipper veered the ship 300 miles to the south and picked up a spanking wind which had been predicted on the chart. The big craft forged ahead and went from seventh place into first.

Meteorology might seem like a far cry from the strange political situation of Ham 'n' Eggs which dominated the California scene in November of 1939. The opponents of the measure which threatened well to bankrupt the state were afraid that many of their voters would not appear at the polls if it rained. They knew the Ham 'n' Eggers would vote come hell or high water. So the anti-Hams consulted Cal Tech on October 14th as to the possibility of rain on November 7th. The Cal Tech men with their isobars and cold fronts and air masses predicted little likelihood of rain, but the anti-Hams tentatively arranged for emergency transportation. On November 3rd, the opponents of the measure again repaired to Cal Tech where they were assured definitely that no rain would fall on the fateful day. They released the cars and busses temporarily contracted for and the weather turned out as predicted. Ham 'n' Eggs died a violent but legal death.

Now why is any of this unusual and how does it affect you directly? What is the practical significance of meteorology to young men who are interested in combat flying?

Weather predictions are nothing new. People have been making them as long as they have had corns or a game leg or creaky

joints. The United States Weather Bureau has made them for almost 75 years. However, the predictions of the past were never very accurate. Until the last few years, all weather predictions were partly guess, partly observation, and partly a matter of past averages. No accurate means for weather observation existed until the Norwegians devised a system which we call today "Air Mass Analysis." We are going to study Air Mass Analysis because it is the basis of all U. S. Army weather procedure, and it is also used by the private airlines and the government.

Before we go into Air Mass Analysis, there are some preliminary things we want to talk about and acquaint you with. Weather forecasts today can be amazingly accurate. With a few illustrations we have seen that these forecasts are of vital importance to many civilian interests. Of what down-to-earth practical importance are they to the military interests? What does meteorology mean to the armies, the navies and the air forces of the combatant nations?

You have all heard of the German battleships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau. You will remember that almost two years ago the Nazis had the colossal cheek to sail these huge battleships up through the English Channel and almost in sight of airdromes where hundreds of powerful bombing and torpedo planes were waiting to pounce upon such big, fat targets.

You will remember, however, just as every one else does, that this amazing stroke of German daring succeeded. The battleships and their escorts ploughed through the waters of this narrow stretch, which had been considered an English lake for centuries, with comparatively little interference or damage. Even the great Winston Churchill was called upon by a wrathful populace to explain why the British Navy and the Royal Air Force had permitted this insolent slap in the British Lion's face.

The truth was that neither the British Navy nor the R.A.F. could have done very much about it. The Navy was anchored in more distant waters for obvious reasons, and vicious flying weather accurately predicted by the German meteorologists balked any effective thrusts by the R.A.F.

On February 9th, a dirty storm with wind, rain and sleet whipped the sullen North Atlantic somewhere in mid-ocean. It moved eastward across the bleak northern waters; and as it moved, the path of this storm was gleefully charted by German

meteorologists. It was their pet—precisely what the German Admiralty had ordered. The gentlemen in the weather office computed that this murky, blinding storm, which would be perfectly safe for the big warships but extremely dangerous for British bombers, would reach the English Channel in about two and one half days.

On the night of February 11th, the ships left Brest in France, turned north, and began the run. The Scharnhorst and Gneisenau reached the Channel on February 12th; alarm signals sounded in airdromes all over the south of England, but the battleships slogged safely on through the wind and driving sleet. The R.A.F. could do little more than stand by in baffled rage and watch its bombers crash into the sea. The worst possible icing conditions for planes coupled with excessively poor visibility made any effective British attack out of the question.

There is every evidence that the Germans have made successful use of long range weather forecasting time and again. Everyone marveled at the German "luck" in Poland. Contrary to the baleful predictions of the so-called "experts" on military affairs who were rigid in their beliefs that the panzers would bog down in a sea of Polish muck, the Nazi armies rolled like devils-on-wheels over good dry land. Hitler's heavy machinery roared onward through successive days of fatal clear weather until hapless Poland was a typical Nazi shambles. Nazi meteorologists had accurately predicted a long run of dry clear weather and the German army's possession of this knowledge sealed the fate of Warsaw in whirlwind time.

It seems that the German attack on Norway was planned to take advantage of a protective cloud cover in early April of that year. This cloud cover seriously hampered the British and cloaked German landing operations. Later in the month, the skies cleared off, and the Nazis took advantage of this to bomb the British Navy into withdrawal.

In Greece and Crete, the Nazi air-ground teams successfully utilized predicted clear weather; and in Libya, Rommel used predicted sandstorms to gain tactical advantage over the British.

In the opening of this introductory talk on meteorology, the speaker discussed several things pertinent to the subject, but none of them was any more significant than any other. He chose the

item about Dr. Smith of Louisiana State for his beginning because it had more intrinsic attention value. It embodied the fundamental appeal of crime—crime in a very high place. He next discussed the relationship of meteorology to motion pictures, football, yacht racing, and then politics. With these last four topics, there was no particular reason to discuss motion pictures first and politics last other than an arbitrary decision. These four topics were not arranged in any order of importance or because one occurred before the other in time or for any other reason.

In putting talks together, a speaker will occasionally come upon a similar situation. He will find himself with a number of assorted topics. Usually, in this case, he will have to determine arbitrarily the order in which he will discuss them and memorize absolutely that order. One speaker on the subject of American public opinion wished to cite several examples of indifferent citizenship from the Gallup poll. He wanted to tell of the carnival barker who thought that John L. Lewis was a negro boxer, the Atlanta housewife who thought that World War II would last "for the duration," the insurance salesman who thought that Marshal Tito was a Japanese war lord and several other not very bright conceptions. He arranged these miscellaneous topics arbitrarily. Since they had no special logical relation to one another, he simply chose the item about the carnival barker first, the item about the Atlanta housewife second, and followed with several additional examples chosen at random.

A speech with miscellaneous and unrelated topics is naturally the most difficult kind to remember. Most talks have subject matter which can be arranged according to some plan. For instance, *often a talk can be put together in chronological sequence.*

If you wished to speak on the life of Winston Churchill and you wanted to indicate the development of his character, it would be logical to discuss certain tendencies which manifested themselves while Churchill served with the British Army in

India, many, many years ago. Then you might like to enlarge upon these character traits as they exhibited themselves while the great man was a war correspondent in the Boer War. Progressing onward in time, you next could present Churchill in dispute with some of Britain's Sea Lords on the eve of World War I and then tell of his heroic and vigorous action in that war. The long period of Churchill's defeat and neglect in the 1920's and 1930's would come next; and then, quite naturally, the final emergence of Winston Churchill as one of the greatest warrior leaders of all time in World War II would follow.

In any kind of biographical talk, the chronological order is the most logical. However, don't begin such a talk by stating when and where a man was born. Being born isn't especially interesting. It's a fairly prosaic occurrence unless, perhaps, you're an elephant. Gather something vital and compelling from the man's life. Start with that. Then make the transition and go back to his babyhood or boyhood if you wish.

Innumerable talks can be arranged chronologically. Something on the development of the Monroe Doctrine as a part of American foreign policy would lend itself perfectly to the time order. A talk on American democracy could begin with ideas of democracy as they appeared in ancient Greece. The expansion and adaptation of these ideas as they reappeared in Italy, in France, and England would follow. Talks on economics—discussions of free trade, mercantilism, controlled economies—can often be arranged chronologically as can talks on the development of art and religion and the physical sciences.

Arrange your talk, if you can, according to the progress of ideas or events in a time sequence, but don't dwell much on dates. Don't have your talk sound like a dull lesson in history. Don't make it too obvious to your audience that your material is arranged chronologically. Too much emphasis on this may kill spontaneity.

Topeka is south of Medicine Hat. Arrange your talks geographi-

cally. With some subjects you can plan an itinerary for your talk just as if you were to take an automobile trip. For instance: suppose you wished to discuss different methods in the growing of wheat. It would be confusing both to you and the audience if you mentioned practices in the wheat country of Oklahoma, jumped to the Palouse Valley of Washington, skipped back to Kansas, returned to the Palouse country, made a few more remarks about conditions in Oklahoma, went north to the Red River Valley of Minnesota, touched again on Kansas, and ended with a general discussion of what is done both in the Canadian province of Manitoba and the American state of Texas.

Why not organize your discussion according to some easily followed plan of geography? Then you can visualize a map and take up your points one by one. In the above talk, start with Texas in the south. Travel north and discuss things in Oklahoma. Continue on into Kansas and then go farther north and tell what they do around Grand Forks and Crookston in the Red River Valley. Cross the border into Canada. Tell what they do in the prairie provinces and then swing left to the state of Washington and the Palouse Valley. In this way you have a plan easy for you to remember and easy for the audience to comprehend.

If your talk deals with problems of the small-town insurance agent on the Pacific coast, don't start with the experiences of a man in Kelso, Washington, drop 'way south to an incident in Blythe, California, backtrack to Coos Bay, Oregon, and continue with a Traveler's agent's story in Yakima. You'll get mixed up with such a hodgepodge and the possibility of forgetting is great. Make out a logical itinerary: start in the north and travel south or start your discussion in California's Imperial Valley and work north toward the Canadian border in Washington.

What are the causes of juvenile delinquency? Arrange your talks according to the cause relationship. Social workers say that juvenile delinquency is brought about chiefly by poverty, bad parental environment, broken homes, instability of modern life,

degenerate literature, and some other influences. How would you put together a talk on this subject? Get one or two or perhaps three actual incidents from the sad roster of delinquency. Use this material for your beginning. Then, with a short transition paragraph, indicate that these examples are concrete evidence of a serious and widespread condition. Ask your audience: "What are the causes for this moral deterioration among youth? Why is it that Helen Barrett, a fourteen-year-old girl of supposedly a good home, shot and killed her own father? Why is it that Paul Jennings of Cleveland, Ohio, sixteen years of age, engaged in armed robbery at Dayton?" Then take up one by one what you conceive to be the causes of these distressing actions. Since children obviously have first contact with their parents, it might be most logical to discuss bad parental environment first; poverty could follow as a second cause, and broken homes might logically be next.

A talk to an audience of manufacturing executives on the subject of abnormal labor turnover in certain industries can follow a similar cause arrangement. Begin the talk with concrete stories of valuable employees lost after a relatively short period of work. Briefly discuss the general problem in a transition paragraph. Then go into the causes. Take them up one by one.

Sometimes you can put a talk together in the order of size. Take the subject of hunting dogs. Why not start with a cocker spaniel? A cocker may be the smallest dog you will discuss. Next, introduce the springer spaniel. He's somewhat bigger. Then tell about the pointer and follow this game dog with the Irish setter. You may end up with an Irish wolfhound, since he is just about the largest of dogs used in running game. This is an easy arrangement: it helps you to keep your material straight and it's easy for the audience to understand.

Arrange talks on machinery and technical subjects according to speed, load, weight, peculiarities of construction. During World War II many speakers dealt with discussions of friendly and enemy aircraft. In speaking of American airplanes, they

usually started with the smaller, lighter pursuit ships such as the P-38, the P-40, the P-51. Next they went into the light attack bombers such as the A-20. Usually their next remarks involved the medium bombers, the B-25, the B-26, and a discussion of the heavy bombers, the B-17 and B-24 followed.

You can do this with locomotives. Discuss the Hudson type, the Pacific type, the Mikado, and others. Or classify locomotives in your talk according to the fuel they burn. Arrange your talk in four main divisions: conventional steam locomotives, steam turbine locomotives, Diesels, and electrics.

Most machinery, whether it is used for road construction or crushing silver ore, will fall into natural classifications according to how it is made and how it operates. Use these natural classifications as divisions for your talk.

In any talk to technical men—remember they are human beings! Don't think that because your audience is made up of engineers or designers of X-ray equipment you can omit the human-interest angles. They may appear to be solemn fellows, little interested in anything but their formulas and mathematics; but they like illustrations, they like stories—they like to laugh!

Make any talk to any audience just as interesting as possible. It is hardly in the cards for you to do this if you discuss nothing but mechanism and statistics. The men in any technical audience were human beings long before they became engineers; their feelings lie deeper than their mechanics. Don't be superficial or trivial, but always bet on the human element. Don't forget the fundamental appeals.

To put together a talk on any subject, look for the natural divisions, the logical steps, the inherent causes. If your subject is communism, you may wish to ask the audience, "Why does a man become a Communist?" Then you may have five reasons in answer to this question. Your five reasons and the discussion of each one will be a natural construction for the talk. In an address on free enterprise and democracy, you may wish to show how the

American ideal of free enterprise and American democracy have worked hand in hand. For this you may have certain monumental interpretations of the Constitution, certain decisions and events in our economic history in mind. These interpretations and events would constitute logical divisions. You might wish to arrange them chronologically. You may wish to discuss a new tax measure enacted by Congress. It can be effective and interesting if you enlarge upon the impact of this tax measure on the large corporation, the small business, the executive, the professional man, the white-collar worker, the laborer. In these divisions you would have a logical, clear arrangement for the listener. Once you have a talk organized and under way—how do you get it stopped?

How do you end a talk?

That depends. If you were to address fellow townsmen on the need for civic reform in your community, it might be well to conclude that kind of thing with a summary of what has been said. For instance, in your remarks you could mention that although money had been voted and appropriated, Western Avenue was paved only as far as Cortland Street. You could remind the audience that the police department completed the year with seven unsolved murders on their books. You might ask them, furthermore, "Why did Harold Collins, brother of the city attorney, leave town suddenly when the suit against the Consolidated Transfer Company entered the courts?" As a last point of discussion, it might be well to recall that the city drinking water had been threatened with contamination twice in the past eight months. Each one of these items, referring to the street department, the police department, the city attorney's office, and the sanitary department respectively, would be discussed in some detail and probably with additional illustrations. Then, for your ending, refer briefly to what you said and summarize: "And so, ladies and gentlemen, we have presented to you the concrete evidence that under the administration now in office there is widespread graft in the street department, serious corruption in the

police department, a strange order of things in the city attorney's office, and a dangerous inefficiency in the department of sanitation."

In any discussion of a problem or a situation, whether it is our present electoral system or the efforts of religious groups to secure public money to support parochial schools, the summary ending is practical and effective. It impresses upon the audience's mind the things you wish them to remember.

End your talk with a quotation. In the summer of 1941, several boys from a CCC camp near Flagstaff, Arizona, went into another Arizona town one day to participate in a wild West celebration. The mayor of this town needed some help with the day's festivities and he asked the boys if they would like a job. They accepted. After several hours, and when the work was completed, the mayor rewarded them according to his own idea of generosity. He gave them a couple of cases of beer. The boys consumed most of it, became quite drunk, staggered into a squalid house of prostitution along the railroad tracks, and a short time afterward all of them were hospitalized in Prescott. They had bad cases of venereal disease.

Why did they do this? A government officer asked one of the boys just this question. The reply was, "The first thing a guy thinks of when he gets slopped up with beer is a woman."

A year after this incident, an army officer, in talking to a group of men on the close correlation of alcohol and venereal disease, used this quotation to close his talk. It was blunt, crude, effective. Whether talks of that kind ever do any good or not may be open to question, but with this ending every man in the audience had something concrete and significant to take away with him.

Quotations of all kinds often sum up in a few hard-hitting words the entire substance of a speech. If you find something appropriate for your particular kind of talk, use it.

End your talk with an illustration. Illustrations are good at the beginning; they are also good for the ending. In discussing the

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dangerous effects of sensational crime news on young, immature minds, a speaker wished to leave his audience with an additional vivid instance of the social destruction this kind of yellow journalism fosters. After a number of illustrations and a general consideration of them, he ended his talk by saying:

George Boggs was the thirteen-year-old son of a wealthy Minnesota lawyer. He was a precocious boy, unusually intelligent for his age. He didn't care much about "normal" boyhood activities—ball games, hikes, tree houses, model airplanes. George loved explosives. He wanted to blow up things, make dynamite and nitroglycerin. Violent destruction had a morbid fascination for him. Also, he loved poisons; an expensive chemical set his father had given him had to be taken away. George had planned lethal potions for the immediate household staff.

Who were his idols? Washington, Buffalo Bill, Babe Ruth? No—dull fellows all these to George. He worshiped Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb. He was thrilled by the very names of two of the most sordid killers in the annals of American crime. George knew every detail of that sensational trial. He could quote pages of testimony, could tell you verbatim what both murderers had said in their insolent defense. All the implications of this unnatural crime brought waves of wild emotional excitement to this young lad.

Where had he obtained this monstrous information? That was easy. He purchased, secretly, every issue of the metropolitan dailies which carried news of the crime. He took them to his room, read them carefully, and became an authority on the trial. The newspapers were to him a manual of criminal activity.

Inevitably, of course, George sought to branch out on his own. Reading wasn't enough; practice was next. They took him away the other day. He had every intention of murdering a young girl in the adjoining neighborhood. They put George into indefinite detention. George won't be reading the newspapers now. In fact, he won't be reading them for a long, long time.

There are other ways to end a talk. However, whatever you do at the completion of a talk, give the audience some sense of finality, the feeling that the thing is over. If the substance of a talk

leads up to the idea that your audience should do something—engage in some action, such as signing a petition, wiring a congressman, buying a ticket—tell them precisely what to do.

People will not act unless you tell them specifically what to do and how to do it. You must say, "Go to the Western Union office tomorrow and send a telegram to the Honorable William C. Browne, House of Representatives, Washington, D.C." or, "Sign the petition in favor of this amendment at the booth in front of Jenkins Arcade tomorrow."

People have good intentions. They will seldom follow them through unless you give clear, concise instructions.

Should a talk be written out? Always! Talks should be written and rewritten. They should be worked over and rearranged and gone over many times before they are given. Lack of thorough preparation has given more speakers the mental staggers on the platform than perhaps anything else. It is impossible for the average person to organize a talk most effectively unless it is written out. You must see it on paper!

Should a talk be memorized?

Never memorize a talk unless you are speaking under unusual conditions or in some especially formal capacity. Few people can handle a memorized talk. Usually it will sound artificial and mechanical; and if you forget a word or two, you are lost. Memorization is a dangerous crutch to lean on. Avoid it at all costs.

Should a talk be read?

Not unless you are President of the United States of America.

If your talk is to be taken down by the press and reported, reading is mandatory. You cannot take the risk of being misquoted or of making some unwise improvisation on the spur of the moment.

Ordinarily, never read a talk. Your audience will nominate you for oblivion. A read talk might just as well not be given. It is a public-speaking zero.

How do you learn a talk?

Memorize absolutely the order of material. You have to know what's coming next. Then take your written script and go over it a number of times out loud. Go over it again and see how much of it you can give without reference to the paper. Get firmly in your mind the general substance of your talk and visualize some plan of organization. Practice many times out loud until finally you can give the entire talk without reference to any script. This practice should be done on several successive days prior to your platform appearance. If you neglect this, there'll be trouble. Nothing will succeed like thorough, adequate preparation.

In the course of learning a talk, you are bound to memorize words, phrases, and even some sentences. That's all right. Just don't try to make an intentional effort to commit the whole thing. When you are ready for the platform, your talk should be in such shape in your mind that you can go through it effortlessly and confidently, but no two deliveries of the talk would be exactly the same.

Should a speaker use notes?

No. With a well organized talk and adequate preparation, you have no need of notes. Notes destroy a speaker's prestige. The audience thinks: If he doesn't know enough about this subject to speak without notes, why is he up there?

If you do feel nervous about going before your audience, memorize the first paragraph or two. This will get you started and there will not be that awful fear of going blank on the stage. Many times it is a good idea to memorize the ending. Some speakers become afflicted with panic toward the conclusion of a talk. A memorized ending can help dispel this.

You'll forget some of your material the first few times you give a talk. What of it? Put your information and your ideas together to the best of your ability, practice your talk diligently, give yourself the break of adequate preparation, and then don't take yourself too seriously. Talk to win—yes—but if you do forget something, the world won't collapse. If you pause too long at one place in the

talk, it is doubtful if they'll know about it in Tanganyika. It is doubtful if even the audience will know about it. What if your knees do rattle a little? The stars will hardly pause in their courses. You'll live to give other talks.

CONCLUSION

Not long ago one of the national magazines printed a cartoon showing a pathetic little gentleman with a meek and beaten look who was about to address an assembled audience of ladies. Beneath this picture the caption read, "My topic for this afternoon will be . . . coal-tar derivatives."

Evidently the artist who drew this picture wanted to show a wretched human being made even more wretched by this dullest of all dull subjects—coal-tar derivatives.

And yet—there are no uninteresting subjects. There are only uninteresting people.

There is no such thing as a "dull" subject.

In proof of this, let's go to the library and see what we can find about coal-tar derivatives.

By looking into the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* under the subjects of "coal" and "coal tar," we find that William Perkin, an English chemist, had tried for two years to build a synthetic quinine from the black, foul-looking stuff called coal tar. One day when he went out to lunch, Perkin left some aniline oil in a beaker. On his return, he found this oil thickened, and to get it out he poured in some alcohol. Instantly the thickened oil became a color wheel of brilliant orchid. Realizing something of the magnitude of what he had stumbled upon, Perkin changed from the search for synthetic quinine to the study of synthetic dye. In a few years he was wealthy from these "geraniums of the gas works."

Although few people have ever heard of William Perkin, his work with coal-tar derivatives was so important that he was one of the key men of the modern world. What had been a useless and

troublesome residue clogging the pipes in the manufacture of illuminating gas became a central item in the great wealth of nations.

From these same magazines indicated in the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*, we learn further that prior to the discovery of coal-tar derivatives the manufacture of perfume was a fabulously expensive process. It required twenty-five tons of violets to produce one ounce of natural flower oil. It required one ton of roses to produce ten ounces of oil. Coal-tar derivatives have changed all of this. The synthetics produce the odor of violet and rose at a minute fraction of their former cost.

In the manufacture of synthetic musk, coal tar has also conquered. Musk is a fixative which blends the odors of any perfume and gives it permanence. Formerly the natural musk came from the gland of a male deer in Tibet. It was so expensive that a pound of the natural product, if it could have been obtained free of impurities, might have cost \$50,000. Synthetic musk is now made with no impurities and at a small fraction of such fabulous expense.

What about the sad little man about to address the ladies? Think they might like to hear these and other interesting facts about perfume and its relation to coal-tar derivatives?

Continuing our study of coal-tar derivatives, we find that modern research has created a fairyland of women's clothes from the repulsive garbage of the coke ovens—coal tar. In ancient times Augustine upbraided fashionable women in their silks for being clothed in "the excrement of a worm." Today, the fashionable and plain alike are clothed in the waste of the gas works. The millions of modern women who dress stylishly and in colorful garb owe their feeling of well-being to the development of coal-tar derivatives. In ancient times only the kings could afford brilliant colors, and as late as World War I in this country, the color famine was so great that warehouse floors were scraped to obtain the last fractional ounce of dye.

Think the ladies listening to the timorous chap talking on coal-tar derivatives would like to hear more about synthetic fabrics and the several thousand hues possible with synthetic colors? Think they would like to hear about the marvelous things coal tar has made possible in draperies, bedspreads, furniture coverings, and myriad other equipment for the home?

The more we read the more we discover that coal-tar derivatives can be the most fascinating of subjects. Its possibilities are almost limitless. It includes information that would please and interest almost any type of audience. We could go on and discover what coal-tar derivatives have meant in plastics, in automobile tires, in the manufacture of high-grade steel and other metals, in medicines, in anesthetics, in materials of war, in insecticides, in preservatives, in fertilizers, and in literally thousands of other things of everyday use.

Oh, you could kill a talk on coal-tar derivatives. You could fill it up with stuff about cresylic acid, toluene, phenol, anthracene and phthalic anhydride. You could easily make it up so that no one but a research chemist would understand it, but why do that? As a subject for a talk it is a "natural." It is crammed with human interest.

How would you organize it?

The organization of a talk on any aspect of coal-tar derivatives would be easy. It naturally falls into topical divisions. Tell our unhappy friend in the cartoon to talk to the ladies about three products of coal-tar derivatives—perfumes, synthetic fabrics, and colors. There are three natural topics for his talk, and each one of these could further be broken down. For instance, the topic of synthetic fabrics could be subdivided into dress fabrics, utility fabrics such as tablecovers, aprons, and so forth, decorative fabrics such as draperies and curtains. If you were to give a talk to men, obviously you would emphasize the coal-tar products of interest to masculine tastes. These can easily be organized under topical headings.

How would you end a talk on coal-tar derivatives?

You could put a variety of endings on this subject almost as great as the thousands of color hues which coal tar has evolved. Suggest to the mouselike little man that he end his talk with a personal note. He might say for his conclusion:

And so, the next time you are riding in the country and you see an ugly gas tank looming up like an eyesore on the horizon, smile and greet it as you would a friend. For it may very well be that the new dress you are wearing—whether the label says Neiman Marcus of Dallas, Texas, or Kleins of New York City—first saw the light of day in an industrial dump heap near just such a tank. And if you yield to that evening of exotic temptation which the purveyors of perfumes guarantee, remember that it is coal-tar derivatives which make possible the extravagance of their claims. And should you ever be blue and think that nothing but a new hat could restore your feeling of assurance, resort again to the witchery of coal tar, because that red feather or those robin's-egg-blue flowers undoubtedly got their coloring from this mysterious chemical magic.

CHAPTER 5

✎ Ever see anyone win anything with his hands in his pockets?

(How to deliver a public talk without stage fright)

Look me in the eye when we are introduced and I shall know what to expect from you before we shake hands.

Even if you refuse to meet my gaze I shall have an idea of what sort of person you are by a glance at your lashes and brows, the manner in which your eyes are set in their sockets, and the way you look about. I have been selecting my friends and enemies, maids and cooks, and judging the people by whom I sit in trains and busses in this manner for more years than most women admit as their age. . . .

A few days ago an ordinary case turned up. I was having tea with a friend named Geraldine. The maid brought in the tea tray and set it in front of my hostess. When she had gone Geraldine asked me what I thought of the girl.

"It's her first day and I'm very much pleased with her," she said. "Her name is Sarah."

I shook my head. "You will find her hypersensitive, stubborn, and vindictive as a witch," I said. "She has light eyelashes. If the remainder of her face were strong, you might take the risk. But even then she would have a chip on her shoulder and would never forget a rebuke or criticism. I'm afraid you'll find that she won't do. Light eyelashes mean trouble."

The next day Sarah, in lighting the coffee percolator, struck a match on a newly decorated wall. Geraldine objected. Sarah began to cry, then started to argue. Geraldine, anxious to prove

me wrong if she could, since her own judgment was involved, gave in. Within forty-eight hours half a dozen such scenes occurred. Sarah was proud, easily hurt, and stubborn. In the end she was discharged, and now I have the job of being present when the new applicants come to Geraldine for inspection. . . .

Fortunately the eyes tell good traits as well as bad ones. Suppose, therefore, that another woman desires to fill a secretarial position with me. She is not so attractively gowned as the first applicant, but I employ her, for she has medium-brown eyes, noticeable for their clear, clean whites. There is neither too much nor too little space between her eyes and her eyebrows are level. The eyes, furthermore, are entirely minus slant. This girl, I know, will prove affectionate, forceful, active, with a certain amount of initiative. Her only deviations will be a few whimsical traits which will amuse me and cause me to appreciate her the more. Best of all, her health will be good, for her eyes are clear and fine.

Not all brown eyes, of course, indicate steadfastness and honesty. If the brown is very light in shade, you may count on inconstancy. If a tint of green is present in the brown, a bad temper is probable. A touch of red in the brown is the signal of willfulness. . . .

Blue eyes of certain shades also have an enviable reputation. When they are large, full, and really blue, they indicate optimism, enthusiasm, understanding, warmth, and a sympathetic insight into other people, plus a love of pleasure and luxury. But there is a light blue eye which is usually shifty and not deeply set in its socket that denotes the sensualist and beauty lover. Particularly does this person, if a man, love feminine beauty. Women whom he invites to tea require chaperons.*

People are interested in themselves. That is hardly news to anyone, but it is a fact often overlooked. Tell a sensitive man with size thirteen shoes that you think big feet indicate dominance and masculinity. He may not show it, but if he's at all normal, he'll want to bound up and down like a pleased St. Bernard. Mention to a woman that you have always noticed her lovely hair. Watch her pat it with a shy, glad look. She'll think of your remark the

* Louise Bascom Barratt, "Your Fortune in Your Eyes," *The American Magazine*, January, 1938.

last thing before she goes to sleep that night. Possibly you made her entire day happy. Stoop down and confess to a laborer mucking in a wet ditch that you wish you had the bulge of his arm muscles. You've made his job more attractive, secured yourself a friend.

People are interested not only in their eyes and what they may reveal of straightforwardness or guile. Conclusions, often falsely drawn and pseudoscientific, about any part of the body, tickle their little human vanities just as much. Watch the quiet, awkward person emerge from his shell when told that he has "the slender fingers of an artistic temperament." Notice the perceptible flicker of pride in the man with "the fine aristocratic nose." See the utter delight in the eyes of a woman graced with the compliment that she has "a thoroughbred's long beautiful legs."

Possibly there is some connection between the shape of anatomical oddities and character. Many people believe or would like to believe there is. But just as many scoff at the idea. However, nothing is more precious to an average mortal, living his routine life of family dishwashing or selling refrigerators, than the exciting thought that the shape of those dishwater hands indicates the soul of a temptress, those tired flat feet, the heart of a corsair.

It would hardly be possible for a speaker standing before an audience of several hundred people to send away even the bulb-nosed and horse-toothed with any kind of individual analysis of character. It is not his function to do so unless he is a professional character reader or analyst. Nevertheless, the speaker should remember that people are interested in themselves. This unassailable fact constitutes another basic appeal for attention.

In a particular kind of situation, a speaker with some information about eyes and their possible connection with character can achieve novel results. As often is the case, let us suppose that a speaker is to address a rather small group—perhaps a chamber of commerce or the usual type of service club. In the short business meeting which many times precedes such a talk, let us imagine

that a committee of five men has been selected to organize and conduct a Frontier Days celebration for the city. This would mean heavy responsibility and a lot of money involved. Naturally, the speaker, seated at the same table with these men, would have a quick opportunity to appraise the eyes of each of them. When called upon to talk, he could immediately summon the attention of the whole group by saying something like this:

"Gentlemen, I do not have the pleasure of knowing your Mr. George Seabrook well. We met for a brief word just before lunch. However, Mr. Seabrook interests me. I would like to make a prediction about him as head of the Frontier Days Committee. Mr. Seabrook should do a brilliant job. It seems to me you could hardly have placed this responsibility in more capable hands.

"Now, why do I say this about a man I have just met?

"Because, gentlemen, I notice eyes. In my travels of the past years I have looked carefully at the eyes of several thousand men—and women. I have looked at them with the idea of trying to determine whether there is any relationship between the appearance of eyes and a person's character. I think there is. Mr. Seabrook has the steel-gray eye common to many executives. I have found that men with this type of eye usually weigh their thoughts; their head rules their heart; they are poised, calm, reasonable. It is the eye of the industrial leader, the sea captain, the brilliant army officer.

"Furthermore, your Mr. Hodges was also a happy choice. From where I stand I can see that Mr. Hodges has large, prominent gray-blue eyes. To me they indicate a man shrewd, good-natured, and above all—successful. Mr. Hodges has straight brows. With that combination, I would bet on his good sense and honesty. Another member of the committee, Mr. Williams, I believe, is down there at the end of the table. Mr. Williams should not disappoint you. His eyes are light blue, clear, and set very firmly in their sockets. That is usually the sign of loyalty, devotion to friends, and consideration for others.

"Large pupils under dark, shaggy eyebrows coupled with a strong jaw and forehead often speak for the fearless man. If you have any trouble and need a fighter, I would say Mr. Staples would fill the bill. He has a good powerful nose, too. The last

member of your committee has that interesting dark conditor under the eyes. Daniel Webster, Irvin S. Cobb, the late Al Smith, and a great many other capable men have been invested with the same mark. Mr. Kenmore, I feel confident, will carry on the traditions of his illustrious company.

"As I look around the room, the eyes of all of you reveal many interesting things and I wish I could discuss them. However, I must get along to my topic."

The reaction of an audience to a personal introduction like this one must be favorable. People love to hear about themselves. A clever speaker with a bent for originality can often utilize this trait. If he is to talk in a moderate-size town or city—a place where people are inclined to know one another pretty well—he can get interesting bits of information about his listeners and incorporate them casually into his talk. The local newspaper editor, the clerk in the corner drugstore, the grizzled ancient who runs the feed mill usually know the story of their fellow townsmen and will divulge it.

Of course, infinite discretion must be used. If one were to find out that Mrs. Frank Robbins, now wife of a prominent banker and sponsor of the talk, ran away at the age of sixteen with a roustabout from Brophy Brothers Dog and Pony Show, it might be better to let this titbit rest. But if Mrs. Robbins is an active organizer for the Republican party or her dahlias are the envy of state garden clubs, she'll like it if some reference is made.

A speaker should make it a point to remember the little mice, too. Audiences are composed not only of bankers' wives and leading merchants and women novelists. Housewives and bookkeepers and a lot of wonderful people who seldom receive much attention are often there. Look at plain little Mrs. Spraggs. Her son is a high-school basketball star. It would thrill her to have that mentioned. There's old Jake Simpson in his carefully pressed black suit. Jake built or helped build half the houses in town. He'll never forget some allusion to that.

This personal-reference type of talk can be used with rela-

tively small audiences. Large audiences are just as engrossed in themselves, but a speaker can avail himself of this interest only in a more general way. He can tell an assemblage of women that the upswept hair-do creates the devastating effect of mature sophistication, or that long hair swirling about the shoulders evokes an insouciant, piquant charm. He's safe in either case. He can also tell the ladies that childbearing will not withdraw the calcium from their teeth, that the most voluptuous secretary ever dandled upon a husband's knee can never compete with a really clever wife. The fact that many artists and connoisseurs of feminine beauty inevitably select the fuller leg and ankle as ideal should solace many a heart.

Even great Caesar was bald! That stark pronouncement can encourage countless men whose hair is a wistful memory. To hear that Abe Lincoln was a business failure at middle age is welcome assurance for those men whose fortunes have not kept pace with their years. News that even the father of our country, George Washington, struggled manfully with dental plates would be of good cheer to those whose smiles betray an unfortunate loss.

Men and women ponder about such things as the arch of their feet and the sway of their backs. Also they have a pathetic, eager interest in the future. In a country designated as chiefly Christian—a religion which frowns upon soothsayers and necromancers—they troop by the thousands to fortunetellers, card readers, crystal gazers, and those who predict love and cash from damp tea leaves. That this particular kind of interest in self is morbid and unhealthful has been unequivocally asserted at times by the fortunetellers themselves.

Speakers also are interested in themselves. Otherwise they would suffer less from stage fright.

What is stage fright?

If you're reclining in one of those mechanical chairs in the office of a professional man whose name on the door reads "Alonzo B. Morton, D.D.S.," you know something of the feeling of stage

fright. You know more of it when that vicious little burr on the end of the drill starts to grind into your molars. Ordinarily footsteps on a gravel path have a friendly, comforting sound. But strange footsteps, stealthy footsteps, at three o'clock in the morning, can make your heart pound, your throat seem choked up. That condition is akin to stage fright. If stocks are down, watching the ticker tape in a broker's office may turn your knees into rubber, your hands into clammy dough. Stage fright does that, too.

Long and marvelous psychological treatises exist to explain stage fright. One practical everyday reason for it seems to be that most people are afraid of being laughed at. Take the average college football hero. On Saturday afternoon with fifty thousand people in the stands, he is terrific. With head up, chest out, he can run, kick, and plunge with beautiful coordination. Tucking the ball under one arm, he'll race down the field with the most envied indifference to the homicidal mania of the rival team. On Monday, however, the story is different. Then, in a college speech course, our debonair warrior stands nervously in front of the class. His face is drawn, his color is bad; his eyes have a desperate look. He can hardly talk because of stage fright. If one puny girl should venture an ill advised titter, his collapse would be complete.

The beginner in public speaking is terrified because he is in a strange new activity which centers the attention of a roomful of people on him. Here is an attractive girl from a well-to-do home in the San Francisco Bay area. She has beautiful clothes, is popular; she ordinarily radiates poise and charm. Yet that same girl, like our football gentleman, can change into a tongue-tied bumpkin in front of an audience. She may even burst into tears.

Many business and professional people are affected in exactly the same way. The winner of the annual Indianapolis automobile race a few years ago—a man who had roared his car around the track at insane speed and dodged death at every curve—could not talk above a frightened whisper when asked to speak at a meeting. The president of a large metropolitan bank admitted he always

slept poorly the night before a talk. He could loan a million dollars, could stake his judgment and reputation without the flicker of an eyelash, but a simple public talk floored him. The owner of an extremely successful real-estate business, whose husband spent most of his time at a neighborhood pool hall to escape the incessant racket of her tongue, was incoherent and breathless before any audience. She said, "I know it's silly, but my heart pounds and I forget what I want to say." Yet in business conversation that same woman talked fluently for hours every day.

Stage fright affects all people. The symptoms are pretty much the same. Breathlessness, tightness of the throat, a gasping for air are typical. Some people perspire freely, some tremble. Men teeter back and forth. Women adjust and readjust their clothes; some even scratch.

Since stage fright affects all people, what can be done about it?

If one is serious about becoming something of a speaker, he might as well say this to himself: "The first few times I'll be scared stiff. Then the fright will begin to wear off. After that I will begin to have a feeling of ease on the platform, and if I am well prepared, I'll actually enjoy about the fifth or sixth talk."

The best remedy for stage fright is adequate preparation.

Now, this preparation does not mean just an adequate or even thorough knowledge of one's subject. The average crack combat pilot who had flown mission after mission of the most dangerous kind in the last war knew his subject quite thoroughly. The complicated instrument panel in a P-38 or a B-24 didn't confuse him. The mathematics of bomb theory or of navigation seldom made his heart pound or his knees tremble. The explosion of anti-aircraft shells didn't disturb him too much or he wouldn't have been able to continue. And yet he could seldom talk about it. Before an audience, many of these pilots were inarticulate and painfully ill at ease.

Why?

There were a number of reasons. In the first place, the pilot was

usually in an entirely strange situation. He was up front alone, with many eyes staring at him. He probably didn't know much about organizing material. He didn't know what audiences were interested in or how to capture their attention.

Also, the matter of delivery was strange to him. He knew little of speech. Even to open his mouth, to articulate clearly and to get his words out in a forceful and enthusiastic manner was a strange process. He didn't know how to stand or what to do with his hands. He was a flyer, not a speaker. Consequently, he was scared.

Many businessmen have a profound knowledge of their subject, but they are wretched speakers. During the war the manager of a large Eastern steel mill addressed an audience of soldiers. He wanted to tell them of the work at his plant. His talk was a failure, yet this man had the familiarity of a lifetime with his subject. He knew metallurgy and vanadium and ferromanganese steel backward and forward. He just didn't know how to present them.

And so, knowledge of one's subject is not enough. Thousands of men are experts in their respective fields but are at a loss to give an effective talk. Take the average big-league baseball player. He must know his business, but he can seldom talk about it. Ask the average insurance executive or stock-market broker to address an audience with a description of their activities. If they run true to form and have had no experience in speaking, the chances are that their talks will be poor. How many superbly skilled surgeons could give an interesting and instructive talk about their activities and the field of surgery?

The speaker must know his subject but he must also know people. He must know audiences. He must know enough about them and the way they react so that his success on the platform will not be left to chance. If he makes this knowledge part of his preparation, the speaker can approach every talk with the poise of certainty.

This knowledge of human nature and what attracts it will do

as much or more toward the alleviation and eventual destruction of stage fright than anything else the speaker has to consider. Hence, the extreme emphasis in this book on what are termed "the fundamental appeals for attention."

For instance, in these days of emphasized struggle between capital and labor, large business concerns employ public-relations departments to set people straight on their activities. Often they send out speakers to defend and explain labor policies. Since subject matter of this type can be of an antagonistic and controversial nature, one should consider its handling carefully.

In view of the fact that this kind of talk will "debunk" current misconceptions, why not start with some "debunking" material which will antagonize no one and quickly draw favorable attention? *The American Mercury* ran an article called "The Myth of the Two-Gun Man," by Charles B. Roth, in October of 1937. In it Mr. Roth said that:

in the hall of Western mythology is the two-gun man, who stalked into literature at an early date, a pair of enormous Dragoon revolvers strapped around his hips. At the first hint of trouble, he pulled both with a graceful movement, so fast the eye missed it. And then he shot both simultaneously. And swiftly! And he is still stalking through Western literature, the darling of pulp editors and their thrill-hungry readers. But there is no such thing as a two-gun man in the accepted meaning of the words. The character is a myth. In the first place, no man can use two guns effectively at the same time; and secondly, it was fatiguing enough to tote one four-pound gun, let alone two.

There were, however, real two-gun men on the frontier—of a different stripe from the blazing figures on pulp-magazine covers. They carried two guns, but used only one at a time. The second gun involved a deadly trick employed against their adversaries. For example, a gambler in a Western faro hall would be fully dressed with his orthodox holster weapon: a large Colt revolver. He wore it outside where the world could see; his customers were similarly attired. But gamblers, from habits engendered in following their profession, do not believe in giving the other fellow a

break. So they evolved a way to kill him quickly with a minimum of risk to their own mortality chart. The second gun was small—perhaps a derringer. It was ingeniously concealed, in the left sleeve, in the crown of the hat, possibly in the top of a boot or even under a newspaper on the table.

The hapless cowboy, probably a youngster and full of whiskey, robbed of his earnings by crooked cards, would become angry. He would start, in his befuddled state, to go for his holster. But the gambler, by making a decisive movement toward his hat, his sleeve, or under the newspaper, would beat him to it by seconds. The cowboy hadn't a chance; he rarely managed even to draw his gun. A Western historian tells . . . that three out of four shooting deaths on the frontier were caused not by big-holster revolvers, but by the spiteful little second guns.*

This is the kind of adventure material which arouses immediate audience attention, especially with men. Since, according to motion-picture statistics all over the United States, Americans are still fascinated by Western characters, this article could furnish an excellent beginning for a certain kind of talk on labor policies. Interesting facts, like those in the above excerpt, can be adapted to lead directly into the main topic. You wish to "debunk" erroneous ideas of labor exploitation; this article "debunks" erroneous ideas of two-gun men. For the transition from mistaken ideas about two-gun men to mistaken ideas about plant employees, simply make a comparison. Show that this widely accepted romantic picture of the doughty gun fighter with double artillery blazing has no basis in historical fact. Then proceed tactfully, to show that the picture of the defeated workingman trudging home to his dingy dwelling with a slim pay envelope also has no basis in your commercial statistics.

Since you know that a talk beginning with this kind of material creates favorable attention right away, what is there to be afraid of? You know that almost anything of adventure, especially Western adventure, has universal appeal. Consequently, those big

* Copyright by The American Mercury, Inc., 1937.

staring eyes in the audience will belong to friends. They will belong to people who are interested in you. Those people out in front want to hear what you have to say.

If you should wish to enlarge upon the plan of showing that some commonly held ideas are false, you might make use of articles like one by Henry Morton Robinson called "No Time like the Present." * Excerpts follow:

For all its chafings and imperfections, our age is superior in security, comfort, leisure, and economic rewards, to any other period or condition of life that ever existed in this sweating, tear-drenched world. . . . When knighthood was in flower (the flowering period filled the 11th century with its perfume) what were the knights actually up to? Why, according to the only authentic records, they were robbing and maiming travelers, violating women, and slaughtering any wretched peasant who tried to protect his mean flock from predatory raids. "What with massacre, rapine, and license raging on every side," cries Gregory of Tours, "human life has as much value as a crushed beetle." An endless recital of murders, perfidies, and tortures fill the pages of Gildas, an historian of the age. Describing the members of Arthur's Round Table, he says: "They are boastful, drunken, murderous, vicious, and adulterous. They are generally engaged in civil war and they prey by preference upon the innocent." Filthy, ignorant and bloodthirsty—such were the Knights of the Table Round. . . .

The curtain descends, and when it rises again we are in the fields of Normandy in the year 1760. Louis XV glitters at Versailles. Ten million peasants, the "noble savages" of Jean Jacques Rousseau, are tilling the soil of France. La Bruyère gives us a realistic description of them. "Scattered about the country one sees certain animals, male and female; they are black, livid and baked by the sun, and they are attached with almost visible chains to the soil which they dig. They retire at night into dens, where they live on black bread, water, and roots. . . ."

And now to Merry England in the year 1820. . . . In the city of Leeds, 30,000 people live in rat-infested cellars unprovided with water, heat, light, or sewers. A dozen persons sleep, eat and

* Copyright, 1933, by The Reader's Digest Association, Inc., December, 1933.

live in the same room; garbage and fecal matter are emptied into the street. . . . The English mill-hand works 18 hours a day and receives for his work \$2.50 a week. His wife works beside him hour for hour, pregnant, ill, exhausted, and gets 25 cents a day. His sons and daughters work. Children, six years old, tend spindles 12 hours a day, or drag coal from mine-shafts not large enough to admit a man. They never play, they never smile, they faint at their work, and they get \$1 a week. If they are orphans they get nothing but their keep. The city of London has contracted to supply the great midland mills with foundlings, and the only stipulation is that it be allowed to include one idiot in every shipment of 20 children!

Debunking is always popular if it does not debunk cherished ideas which are personally important to people. Robert Ripley in his daily feature "Believe It or Not" has made a fortune in telling people they were wrong. However, he doesn't try to tip over their religion, their politics, or their economics.

Hence, if you approach an audience with unusual items about Western gun fighters, armored knights, and peasants from the land of dancing and light wines, people are going to like you and be interested in you.

What is there to be afraid of?

If you speak with enthusiasm and courtesy and other attributes of the successful performer, you will be popular—at least for the period while you are on the platform. Does popularity terrify you? Most human beings like it. They lie awake nights and yearn for that handsome state of affairs.

Stage fright arises largely out of uncertainty. The person afflicted with it is uncertain of his reception. He regards the audience as he would a skittish horse, yet there is no need for this. It is the attitude of the rank amateur. Human beings follow no scientific rule in their reactions, but generally they do follow an almost monotonous pattern of response.

While World War II was still in progress, a young woman on the West Coast published a book about the licentious court of

King Charles II. The heroine of the story was an opulent beauty with a strong taste for men. It was whispered about that the tale was lurid, sensational, and very naughty. Who read it? A few hundred sophisticates in New York, Chicago, and Beverly Hills? Millions of people read it, and the more they banned and denounced the novel, the more they flocked to the bookstores.

People follow a pattern. Most of them are interested in the same things. In this book they are called "the fundamental appeals for attention." The psychologists have other names for them.

The speaker who finds that he is still jeopardized by stage fright after his fifth or sixth talk—provided he prepares his subject thoroughly, considers his audience carefully, and remembers that he must talk with vitality and enthusiasm—is rare. Extreme stage fright, except in a person giving his first or second public talk, is usually lack of preparation or a poor understanding of men and women. Young people in their late teens are perhaps more sensitive to the opinions and criticism of others than those of any later age, yet there are few college students who cannot give a surprisingly good talk after a few well prepared trials.

Mr. Frank F. Collins of Champaign, Illinois, gave a talk some time ago to the Kiwanis Club of that city. His subject was "Broom corn." Broomcorn is prosaic stuff; it isn't sensational. It isn't the sort of thing that jumps at the reader from the tabloid pages. It grows in plain, ordinary farm country, where the round of daily life is placid, uneventful. But Mr. Collins took this subject—which could be a deadly bore—and made it not only informative, but delightful. He showed by the way he put his talk together that he knew as much about human beings as he knew about his subject. You can't talk to men about just broomcorn. You must dress it up one way or another. Mr. Collins used concrete material, amusing anecdotes, and an informal style which would be sure to please his type of audience. Paragraphs from the talk are reprinted here:

When Franklin was about to launch "The Saturday Evening Post," a publication that has now worked up a rather tidy circula-

tion, he fell desperately in love with a little, blue-eyed Quaker lass, and as she reciprocated his affection in fullest measure, he hied himself to her widowed ma and asked for her hand in marriage. When the good lady hesitated in giving her consent he asked what her objections were. She replied she had no objections to him personally but was afraid his future was staked on a very hazardous undertaking. There were already two newspapers in America and he proposed to start a third. She was afraid that in a field of endeavor so highly competitive he would have great difficulty in extracting sufficient mazuma to support her little gal in the style to which she had been accustomed. I too know something of overcrowded newspaper fields and I'll mention that a bit later as it is directly responsible for my connection with the broom-corn industry.

Until Franklin was developing some gray hairs, the sweeping down in America was done with tough twigs tied in bundles or with hickory brooms. Hickory brooms were made by the simple process of taking a straight hickory stick and a sharp jack-knife and shaving down the outer portion of the stick to a point about three inches from the bottom, leaving these attached and bending them over the end, tying them together and cutting off the ends evenly. I ran across one of these brooms in the city museum at Dayton, Ohio, a few years ago and sought permission to borrow it to exhibit at a convention of the National Broom Manufacturers Association, but the guy in charge of the museum either thought too much of the broom or too little of me to grant the request. . . .

Broom corn is native to India. When Franklin's fame had exceeded colonial bounds, some friend abroad sent him a crude little whisk broom which he found useful in dusting off his Sunday "britches" when he strolled down to Independence Hall to sign the Declaration of Independence or sallied forth for other public appearances in the line of civic duty.

On this little broom he found three tiny seeds clinging to the panicles of the fiber, and being of a curious turn of mind and anxious to learn what type of plant produced such tough, pliable fiber he planted the seed in his garden. One of the seeds grew and produced a tall graceful plant somewhat resembling Indian corn, with a more slender stalk, narrower leaves, and in place of the tassel the top flaunted a crest of fiber. This plant attracted

the attention of his neighbors and he gave them some of the seed and for several years broom corn was seen growing in the flower gardens of Philadelphia simply for ornamental purposes.*

After these opening paragraphs, Mr. Collins went on to tell of the utilization of the plant to manufacture brooms in the East. Shortly after the Civil War, broomcorn was grown in the Midwest, and Mr. Collins became interested in it after the turn of the century:

When I came to Arcola at the turn of the present century it seemed to me one field in every four or five was devoted to broom corn, and newspapers in Arcola were about as thick as broom cornfields in the territory adjacent thereto. Here was a town of less than 2500 population supporting three local newspapers, although when I say "supporting" I use the word somewhat figuratively. I became the publisher of the *Arcola Record*, an old Republican paper established in 1866; across the street was the *Herald*, the Democratic weekly, faithfully exuding the doctrines of their beloved Tom Jefferson liberally sandwiched with patent-medicine advertising, while down the street was the *Arcolian*, an independent paper presided over by a rather talented writer, a master of invective, who took pot-shots at most everyone, but especially me.

Competition was keen but we three publishers remained on fairly friendly terms and occasionally went fishing together in the Okaw River four miles west of town. Along the banks of the more or less raging Okaw there was a fine persimmon grove and in the fall of the year when the fish failed to respond in a proper spirit of co-operation we would climb those persimmon trees and eat of the fruit thereof in order that we might shrink our bellies to a size proportionate to the rations we were able to acquire by means of our labor in the "Fourth Estate."

There I had a distinct advantage. I was much the youngest of the three publishers and the tender walls of my youthful stomach shrank more readily; so I was able to subsist on less rations, save something from my earnings, and eventually bought out the other

* From "Speaking in Public" by Wayland Maxfield Parrish. Reprinted by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons, copyright, 1947, and of the author, Frank F. Collins.

two papers and consolidated the three as the *Record-Herald*, and was thus engaged as a country newspaper publisher for thirty-seven years. However, long before this, feeling the need of more room in which to flap my fledgling editorial wings and due to the fact that there was no trade publication devoted to the broom and broom-corn industries, I founded *Broom and Broom Corn News*, which I published for a period of thirty years. . . .”

Mr. Collins then devoted a considerable portion of his talk to a description of how broomcorn is harvested and prepared for market. Since brooms sell in a highly competitive market, Mr. Collins used this amusing story to illustrate how avid some manufacturers are for orders:

A Chicago manufacturer seeking to widen his territory sent his salesman out to Kansas. He was so laden with samples that he dropped dead of heart failure at Topeka. There was nothing on his person to identify him except the order book bearing his name and that of his employer. The coroner wired the factory of his death and asked what disposition they should make of the remains and was surprised to receive the following telegram: “Search the body for orders. Return broom samples by freight.”

A speaker who uses this kind of material need not be afraid of an audience. It's good homely stuff, and if delivered well, people will give it their attention.

What is good delivery?

Good delivery is about as difficult to define as “horse sense.” You can identify it when you see it, but it is hard to explain. Good delivery, of course, involves speaking with enthusiasm. Even that means different things to different people. Most speakers think that they talk enthusiastically. And yet, do they? The answer, many times, is No. Just before America entered the last war, a foreign correspondent of a great New York newspaper addressed a large audience in Portland, Oregon. He had a treasure house of firsthand information to share with his listeners. He had lived for years in Tokyo. The people before him were anxious to

absorb every word. Unfortunately, they could not. The speaker was dull. The talk was a failure.

This newspaper correspondent doubtless thought himself an enthusiastic speaker. No man goes before audiences several times a week on tour unless he thinks he's pretty good. Most people *think* they're enthusiastic.

A large corporation executive in New York City is often asked to speak. He's an imposing man, tall, handsome, broad-shouldered. He's a man of tremendous executive ability, with a guiding hand in many companies. Yet his speeches are dull beyond belief. All of the drive of his business activities stalls when he stands before people. He utters words in a dead monotone devoid of animation. Why is he asked to speak? He is an important man, and it is good strategy to flatter his ego.

If you were to ask this man if he talks with enthusiasm, he would undoubtedly answer Yes. He would resent any implication to the contrary.

Beginners will often say, "But I don't feel enthusiastic." What difference does that make? It is doubtful whether stage and screen personalities always feel full of vitality and enthusiasm. They're human. They have bad days. But as far as the audience is concerned, they always feel the same—wonderful.

A public talk isn't conversation. It isn't just talking to one's neighbor. It's a bit of a show. It must be built up, expanded beyond mere conversation. An audience expects and demands enthusiasm, vigor, force, vitality; a speaker cannot let them down. It is better that a speaker be naturally enthusiastic, but if he can't really feel it, he must assume it. His personal feelings must not matter too much.

Enthusiasm is the great indispensable. Without it you don't have a talk.

Since it is possible for a speaker to be deluded about the enthusiasm of his delivery, what can he do about it? How can he know whether he is animated, vital? The only practical way to

find out is to have suggestions and criticism from a competent teacher. You cannot learn enthusiasm from a book. And as with halitosis, often your best friends won't tell you. Coaching and instruction are necessary.

Similarly, there are other aspects of delivery which can hardly be gained from a book. Beginners usually need a teacher to show them how to look into the eyes of their audience. If left to their own devices, they'll look at the green hills out the window or examine intently their shoelaces. Many stare at some anonymous spot on the back wall. A good teacher can correct this.

Good facial expression adds immeasurably to a talk. This, too, should be practiced with a teacher. Too many speakers perform with the rigid stare of a beached codfish. Others look shy, embarrassed. Still others look solemn as a hangman about to spring the trap. The public platform is no place for the "dead pan."

A man who walked from Capetown, South Africa, to Cairo, Egypt, was asked what weapons he carried. He replied, "A tin whistle and a smile." His questioners, naturally surprised, asked him to explain. He told them he carried the tin whistle for any animals he might encounter—a shrill blast would scare them off—and the smile was for the natives he would meet.

Audiences, too, respond to the universal language of a smile.

In the early 1920's lavish American musical shows were perhaps at their zenith in New York, and Al Jolson, Eddie Cantor, Will Rogers, Marilyn Miller, and others were making entertainment history on Broadway. The significant thing about many of these stars was not a great voice or exceptional talent. Hundreds of Americans could sing better, dance better, and tell funnier stories. But all these stars had one thing in superb abundance: personality. And a warm, infectious smile is the trademark of personality.

A speaker must smile; he must be pleasant. He is in much the same position as that of a man going into a room to be introduced to a group of strange people. If he smiles, and if he is friendly,

his welcome is usually assured. If he meets people with a stiff, wooden face, he may be left to brood on the window seat.

But sometimes a speaker must frown. He must express doubt, dislike, censure, and other human attitudes. He can't always smile.

If he is deploring the criminal carelessness and drunken driving which account for forty thousand automobile deaths a year in this country, he can't smile as if that situation were delightful.

It is amazing how ignorant or indifferent many speakers are to the utter necessity of employing the right kind of facial expression. It is axiomatic that "you must make faces at them"—meaning, of course, the audience. The knowledge of how to do this is part of the speaker's preparation.

If you were a lawyer, talking on some aspect of the law, and you wanted to use the following anecdote to illustrate a point, the flexibility of your face would pretty well determine its effectiveness:

Today a curious little break saved a client of mine from the electric chair.

This fellow is a moron, twenty years old. He walked into a speakeasy and shot to death one of the customers. His excuse was that "this guy insulted my girl."

What made the case apparently hopeless was that my client had signed a long, detailed confession.

"Was this confession extorted from you by violence?" I asked him. "What I mean is, did the cops beat you up?"

"Dey treated me plenty rough," he remarked. But that was all I could get out of him. There was nothing for me to build a third degree case on.

Today at the trial, one of the detectives was testifying. My moron plucked at my sleeve.

"Dat's de guy gimme de coat," he whispered.

"What coat?" I asked.

"Sure," he said. "My coat was all covered wid blood from de beating dey gimme. And dis guy gimme a clean coat and trun my bloody one away."

"Where is that coat he gave you?" I asked.

"Sure," he said. "I got it down in me cell."

"When you go down to lunch," I said, "get that coat, and bring it back here. It may save your life."

It did. When I got through cross-examining that detective, the State was ready to accept a second-degree murder plea, which meant life imprisonment instead of death for my client.*

Gesture, too, is part of delivery. It is a great bugaboo to the beginner. Many books devote pages to this elusive subject, but you can't collect a stock of gestures from the shiny pages of a book. A person's expressive motions must come from within himself.

Everyone gestures unconsciously in ordinary conversation. It's the most natural thing in the world to emphasize a point or illustrate an idea by some suggestive motion of the hand or head. If your next-door neighbor wins a quarter of a million on the Irish Sweepstakes or the Democrats have a landslide in Maine, you won't remain stiff as a tailor's dummy when you tell your best friend about it. You'll do things: things with your hands, your arms, your head and face. It's practically impossible to talk about anything without gesture unless you're discussing the weather with a bore sitting next to you on the bus.

A puppy is fun to watch. An old dog isn't. A puppy is full of animation, movement. An old dog snores by the fire or yawns in the midday sun. "Good old Duke," they say, but no one stands around to watch him. All of us like animated beings. We like people who move and who gesture. They're more interesting. The smart public speaker remembers this.

Gesture can be overdone. The late Huey Long flailed his arms like a windmill. Billy Sunday, the evangelist, used to jump about like a spastic cricket. He even smashed chairs and wrecked furniture in his ferocious zeal for the Gospel. Most speakers, how-

* Michael F. Pinto, "In the Name of the Law," *The American Magazine*, April, 1934. Reprinted by permission.

ever, err on the side of not enough movement, not enough gesture.

In walking to the platform, a speaker should bear in mind that impressiveness is a cardinal tenet of good speaking. Look good and the audience will think you are good. An audience likes to see a man come before it with impressive poise. Consequently, a speaker should walk with grace and dignity—both of which are hard to explain.

If you want to watch something walk with infinite grace and dignity, go to the zoo. Stay away from the camel pen and don't give any time to the musk ox. Go over to where they keep the black panther. If they haven't one, a tiger will do. Watch that walk. Notice that exquisite, effortless motion. If it's a tiger, notice the lift and carriage of the head. He may be behind bars, but if the animal is well, there's no suggestion of apology or defeat. A tiger isn't arrogant—he's just sure of himself. The speaker would do well to emulate this.

When you stand, keep your head up and your stomach in. Don't lean, don't slouch, and keep your hands out of your pockets. The latter isn't a serious fault, but it annoys the audience. Furthermore, you can't be animated and filled with enthusiasm if your hands are stuck in your pockets. Get them out, because you're going to use them!

When you go before an audience, don't take the attitude of an English schoolboy out to play cricket. Don't speak for the sport of the thing. Speak to win!

Ever see anyone win anything with his hands in his pockets?

When you take your position to speak, don't start immediately. Look at your audience for a few seconds—all of them. Smile. Then begin. Audiences are like horses. They like sure, confident people to handle them. Similarly, at the end of your talk, don't race to your seat. Wait a few seconds. What you have just said is important. If it wasn't, why did you speak?

Don't thank an audience. They should thank you. And never

apologize in any way. If you know your talk is going to be bad, give your listeners the only adequate apology. Stay home.

When you begin to speak, your voice and the way you use it has much to do with the success of your performance. The handling of voice is an infinitely complex thing, and you won't get it from a book. Many speech books have pages and chapters filled with anatomical diagrams which indicate the vocal bands, the uvula, and the alveolar ridge. Openwork skeletons illustrate the mechanism of voice production and the action of implosion and explosion. Elaborate drills designed with great care to help the student improve the control of his voice supplement the anatomy and the difficult terminology. All of this is very good, but, unfortunately, few people ever bother to read it. Voice science is a complicated thing, and to date no one has made it attractive on the printed pages of a book.

Knowledge of what one can do with his voice can usually come only from a teacher and from much experience in public speaking. Voice science is valuable, but everyone interested in giving successful public talks doesn't have to make a study of it. The average man or woman can speak well with only a very rudimentary knowledge.

CONCLUSION

A successful riding master has said, "Remember that a horse has a one-track mind. He can think of only one thing at a time. If he wants to run away, give him something else to think about. If a threshing machine or a blowing tumbleweed frightens him and he wants to bolt, worry him with the bit. Don't hurt his mouth, but get his mind on something other than running away."

Audiences are much like horses. Don't let their minds run away. You don't have to worry an audience. Just lead it. Show people by your concrete, arresting material that you know what human beings are interested in. Among other things, they're interested in themselves. Show them by your forcefulness that

you know what commands their attention. Show them by your facial expression that you understand the infallible appeal of animation. Show them by your smile and your friendly look into their eyes that you wish to speak to each one of them sincerely and personally.

This is not difficult. It does take some instruction, some experience, and practice. But people react with characteristic sameness. Adequate preparation will produce that feeling of confidence in a speaker which reduces stage fright to insignificance.

If you are afraid to give a talk in one of your first trials and the whole thing seems like torture to you, why not capitalize on that? Give a talk on "torture." It's a fascinating subject. It's sure-fire. There's a twisted something in all of us that grimly enjoys hearing about the monstrous torments to which our fellow man was put in ages past. Libraries abound with material such as this:

Torture as a legitimate arm of jurisprudence first appears in Egypt and Persia. In the reign of Rameses IX (1200 B.C.) some robbers of Pharaoh's tomb were tortured to secure confessions of guilt; records of the time show that their hands and feet were squeezed between stone rollers until the desired statements were made. In Greece, torture was well established as a part of the judicial system; theoretically no freeman could be tortured, but whenever a despot uncovered a conspiracy endangering his life, freemen were burned and broken until the last detail of the plot was revealed. According to Herodotus, roasting inside a brazen bull was the commonest form of torture known to the Greeks . . .

The thumb-screw was probably the commonest device in the repertory of torture. Now the name "thumb-screw" might indicate that the thumbs alone were mangled by this machine, but actually the thumb-screw was used to crush *all* the joints of the body. This instrument was placed, let us say, around a foot, knee, or wrist; pressure was applied by tightening the thumb-screws till the desired bones were completely crushed—or the victim decided to confess. . . . An ingenious variation of the screw principle was the knobby crown, an iron band knobbed on its inner surface, which was placed around the forehead and gradually tightened till the skull cracked like a walnut.

If confession came too hesitantly, the victim was placed on the rack, a stretching-engine designed to pull the human body asunder by means of ropes and pulleys. One of these diabolical machines was in every well-equipped castle and dungeon in Europe, and was frequently used as an instrument of extortion. If an unlucky peasant was reported to have a store of gold hidden somewhere in his field, he was stretched upon the rack, the pulleys creaked and the peasant's secret was either torn from his lips, or his limbs were torn from their sockets. To prevent embarrassing outcries, a Spanish Pear was thrust into his mouth. This was a metal gag with a strong spring inside it; when closed, it could be jammed into the victim's mouth. By releasing the spring, the gag flew open and the sufferer's jaws were stretched so far apart that he could utter no sound. . . .

From the unusually complete collection of torture instruments found in the Castle of Nuremburg, it must be inferred either that the German courts were fantastically brutal or the German inventors particularly ingenious. Here, among other ghastly devices, was found the notorious *Eiserne Jungfrau*, the Iron Virgin that gripped so many unhappy mortals in her fatal embrace. The Iron Virgin was an iron-bound oaken cylinder with two doors; her interior was studded with spikes, and when both doors were closed on a victim he was impaled on spikes entering all parts of his body.*

* From Henry Morton Robinson's, "Come Rack! Come Rope!" Copyright, 1934, by The Reader's Digest Association, Inc., February, 1934.

CHAPTER 6

☛ . . . *the damnedest numbskull he'd
had up a tree in twenty years*

(You have to make an audience laugh—some ideas on
how to do it)

ALONG the eastern rim of Chenango and Madison counties in the grassy heart of New York state runs a rusty, single-track, standard-gauge railroad, twenty miles long. Its name is the Unadilla Valley Railway, but the train crews of the New York, Ontario & Western, who pick up its Manhattan-bound milk at New Berlin, call it the Buckwheat & Dandelion; sometimes just the B. & D. Most of its ties lie flush with the fertile loam, partly concealed by weeds. The right-of-way averages about thirty-five feet from fence to fence, and the fences are imperfect barriers to the Holsteins that alternately graze and doze behind them. When a Holstein wanders onto the Unadilla's tracks the Unadilla's little ninety-eight-ton Mogul comes to a stop, and Alfred Patrick, the conductor, shoos her back to pasture. The train also stops frequently at Sweet's, where the tracks cross N.Y. 8. "*They won't stop,*" says Alfred Patrick, referring to the scorchers in their high-speed automobiles.

Despite these and graver interruptions, the train of the Unadilla Valley Railway succeeds in running the entire length of the line and back again twice almost every day of the year, and sometimes three times. In the winter, when the snow banks south of Bridge-water stand head-high, this is something of a feat. More than once the train crew has spent the night on the tracks, and Paul Stillman, the station agent at Leonardsville, remembers one winter

when he and the general superintendent took a train out of there on Tuesday noon and reached New Berlin that Thursday night, a trip of fifteen miles. But from the days when the swollen creek begins to sweep the last March snow down toward the Susquehanna and the bright red plows sprout on the porch at Sackett's hardware store, right through the day when the star-route postman gets out his sheepskin and the chairs are moved from the veranda into the clock-loud lobby of the Eagle Hotel, the little engine pulls its load from New Berlin to Bridgewater and back again morning and noon, morning and noon, without haste and without failure. Not since last autumn has it jumped the track. Only once in forty-three years has there been an accident so shattering that the train could not run that day. . . .

To appreciate just how deeply the Unadilla is embedded in the green and white mosaic of valley life, the best way is to ride with Alfred Patrick in the caboose of his midday train. . . .

Leaving the New Berlin yard, you can glimpse the old passenger coaches rotting among the burdocks on the big Y where the train will turn around after its trip. But soon it is open country; George has 150 pounds of pressure up and Fred takes the first crossing at a full twenty miles an hour. The caboose rocks like an old interurban trolley, but through the open window a grime-screened Barbizon landscape unreels at a dreamlike pace that lets you see every woodchuck's hole in the small fields, every trillium and tanager in the marshy woodlands, and the steel barrette on the hair of the farmer's wife in her laundry-shaded yard.*

People like "folksy" things. Whether or not the "folksy" may be classified as a fundamental appeal for attention is open to question, but people are drawn to stories of old-fashioned and forgotten things rich in human interest. To millions of big city people caught in the pressure and tensions of modern urban America, something like the Unadilla Valley Railroad would seem like a pleasant excursion back to other scenes and other times when life was quieter, easier, more secure.

Metropolitan America is made up largely of men and women who came from such places as Rolling Prairie, Beaver Dam,

* Reprinted from the August, 1938, issue of *Fortune* by special permission of the Editors.

Pawnee City, Scott's Mills. The memory of life in those little hamlets sprawled on the plains or tucked in the foothills dies hard. And so, stories of quaint and forgotten things appeal: stories of people brave enough or lucky enough to live where the grass is underfoot and the wind is fresh; stories of places where the cows graze quietly on a lonely hill; stories of the spring house or the old mill or the oak grove on the north forty; stories of a little farm or an old white house on a village street in midsummer. People like them.

How can a speaker use this kind of material? Opportunities often present themselves. He may wish to talk about the early life and experiences of some noted person. He may turn to philosophical subjects and discuss with an audience whether or not this rapid, loud, mechanical civilization of ours is progress after all. He would naturally draw on "folksy" material to make comparisons. For instance, he might compare the Santa Fe Railroad's Super Chief with its freight of sophisticated, worldly travelers and the Unadilla Valley's train with its complement of unhurried country people. Both represent part of the American scene today; both exemplify a kind of life.

Much of the power of Abraham Lincoln as a speaker and as a lawyer lay in his matchless ability to play upon audiences and juries by calling up some homely tale or reminiscence. People could understand what he said because he spoke of simple and familiar things. When Duff Armstrong, the son of his old friends Jack and Hannah Armstrong, was on trial for his life, Lincoln told the jury that years before, he had rocked the defendant in his cradle. With words he depicted simple scenes from the Armstrong cabin at Clary's Grove on the Illinois prairie. He even told the jurymen that Hannah Armstrong used to wash his dirty shirts for him and that he was sure such essentially kind people could not have harbored a murderer in their son.

At another time, when a group of proslavery hotheads threatened his life, Lincoln wisely began a speech to an agitated and

partially antagonistic audience by mentioning his Kentucky birthplace and his boyhood on Little Pigeon Creek in Indiana. Instead of an enemy, as Lincoln spoke, they saw a man whose background was similar to their own. They could understand and like this man who made them see the cabin in the wilderness, the hearth fire on a winter's night, the corn planting and tree felling. He was unmolested.

People like the familiar; they also like the unfamiliar. Adventure is one of the fundamental appeals for attention. Adventure as most people think of it—strange or dangerous experiences in distant and foreign lands—seldom happens to the average man. However, he has immense interest in it. It is an age-old appeal, and material such as this from Edison Marshall's story, "One for Me, One for the Tiger," will excite most audiences:

The Rangiya Reserve, which is in the vast jungles of the Bhutan frontier, proved to be infested with tigers. We saw tracks many times every day. On fifteen occasions we saw live tigers; I shot three and a fine panther. But to our amazement there was not a single full-grown male in the forest. It was one of the most fascinating mysteries either of us had met in years of hunting. To solve it, we decided to hold a council of all the elders of the surrounding villages, as well as several wild-eyed jungle men.

"The sahib does not care to waste cartridges on any more small or medium-sized tigers," John told them with a flourish. "Where are the great tigers?"

There was a long palaver. Finally a fiery-eyed old man, lean as a greyhound and covered with scars, spoke up: "Tell the sahib that when a tiger grows great and heavy, he leaves the forest."

"Why?"

"Because he can no longer catch deer and wild pigs."

I saw John's eyes light up before he translated this, and I knew he had something.

"Where do the great tigers go?"

"To the open grasslands, sahib, where the cattle graze in thousands."

"This is folly. You may stand in one spot and see for miles. Save in the nullahs, there is not a tree, nor a shrub. The grass is high in season, but now it's like a cut lawn."

"But at the bends of the rivers, sahib, there are small marshy places where the grass is high and rank, and never burns. There abides the old *bagh*, twice a week rushing out, picking his buffalo or his cow, and dragging it into the grass to eat."

It was a revolutionary idea. Neither John nor I had ever heard of tiger hunting on the cattle plains; it sounded silly. Also it was hard to believe that a stray American could locate giant tigers that resident Englishmen knew nothing of. But John was half native. He said you could never tell about India. Anyway, we broke camp and put up our tent, like a sore thumb, in the middle of a perfectly open plain. When two fine elephants loaded with an English hunter's supplies came by our camp on a short cut to a forest reserve, his mahouts and his baggage wallahs plainly thought we were crazy.

But, you know, that old villager was right? In fact, the situation was incredible. The vast plain was dotted with cattle, yet the Nepalese stockmen had a saying, "One for me, one for the tiger." Half their wealth went down the tigers' gullets.

But could we kill the tigers? Frankly, the Nepalese replied, no. The sahib might be able to shoot the middle-sized, innocent jungle tigers, but not these gigantic and cunning old demons. These brutes knew every trick of the hunter's trade. . . .

Now, actually, there are only two practical ways to hunt tigers. One of them, favored by the lords of India, is to have hundreds of natives beat through the jungle, driving the baited tigers to waiting guns. . . .

The other method—to lay for the tiger—sounds very unheroic, if not sneaking, but it is the best way, the sportiest way, and the most costly way in the hunter's patience, will power, intelligence and energy. By the time he has got through outwitting his tiger and getting him in the bag, by the great *shikari* god, that tiger has been earned!

The usual method is this: You buy a cow, which costs about five or six dollars. You tie her at some likely place in the jungle, and feed and water her every day. If you are lucky, within a few nights the tiger will discover the cow and kill her.

This seems rather hard on the cow, but you must remember that the tiger is going to kill something anyhow, and that, unlike a goat or a dog, a tethered cow seems unable to imagine danger and never realizes its approach. The tiger kills the animal instantly. . . .

During the following day or night the tiger will attempt to return to his kill. If, in the meantime, you have concealed yourself in an ambush already prepared, you may get a shot at him.*

Again, a person preparing a talk may say: "Well, yes, adventure is fine; it's a wonderful appeal, but the most adventurous thing I do every day is cross the boulevard. How can I illustrate a point in my talk with some tale of adventure?"

The answer is, of course, the library. It is often better to have firsthand experiences to tell an audience, but most of an educated person's stock of knowledge comes from books and sources outside personal experience. Many times the man who reads about adventure can do a much better job of retelling the story than the adventurer himself.

A speaker at a high-school commencement used adventure material very effectively to illustrate the inescapable obligations which living in this world often entails. In contrast to most commencement speakers who think that young, eager minds can be charmed into the noble life by nebulous and abstract references to "duty," this man told of a young American who went to the Straits Settlements to become a rubber planter. He was sent to the northern jungle country, where tigers and other dangerous game abounded. His chief responsibility was to keep fifteen hundred natives contented and at work on the rubber trees. Consequently, when a jungle killer turned man-eater and began to terrify the workers, it was this man's duty to hunt down and kill the marauding beast. It wasn't a matter of what he wanted to do; it was strictly a matter of what he had to do.

There's another kind of adventure, not as wholesome to tell about as tiger hunting, but it does have a morbid hold on people's attention. It is adventure in the nether world, which is usually

* Edison Marshall, "One for Me, One for the Tiger," *The Saturday Evening Post*, June 11, 1938. Mr. Marshall is the author of *Shikar and Safari*, which also contains this material, and of the historical novels *Benjamin Blake*, *Great Smith*, *Castle in the Swamp*, and *Yankee Pasha*.

investigated by the social worker, the physician, the psychiatrist. Here is an example:

It was 11:45 on a hot, cloudy morning. Manhattanites were walking more slowly than usual along Fifth Avenue. A man stopped short, peered upward at the elaborate limestone façade of the Gotham Hotel. At once a crowd closed in behind him, followed his horrified gaze. On a narrow window ledge, 17 floors above the street, stood a young man, precariously teetering. He was 26-year-old John William Warde of Southampton, L. I., who had recently been discharged from an insane asylum and with his sister was visiting friends in Manhattan. At a slight reproof from his sister, Warde had rushed to the window, climbed out on the ledge.

Police ordered him in but he threatened to jump if they touched him. "I've got to work this out for myself," he cried. All afternoon, on his twelve-inch-wide perch, he argued with his sister, a priest, a doctor, a minister. He drank a dozen glasses of water, lit countless cigarettes, pondered his problem. Should he finish the act the audience of 10,000 was waiting for, or return ignominiously to safety? The afternoon wore on, evening came. Still John Warde had not solved his problem. At 10:38 he heard the rustle of a rope net which police were vainly trying to anchor below him. He flipped his burning cigarette out and down, 17 floors to the street. "I've made up my mind," he cried, and jumped. The crowd shrieked, rushed forward, suddenly retreated in silence.*

A tragic, sensational story like the preceding has limited possibilities for use as illustrative material in a talk. However, if treated seriously, it might be used to indicate something of the confusion which some people feel with the burdens of present-day living.

Social problems generally have great fundamental appeal. Insanity, juvenile delinquency, prostitution, drug addiction, alcoholism, and other social evils will quickly focus attention on whatever a speaker is saying. The magazines of the day are filled

* Courtesy of *Time*, copyright Time Inc., 1938.

with descriptions and revelations of this sort of thing. Public interest in social deterioration is often neither sincere nor constructive, but it is an interest. Fortunately, there are aspects of what we call "social problems" which are not tragic and which may even be humorous. "A Bum's Guide to Los Angeles" was the bold title of an *American Mercury* article by Tom Griswold which appeared in the December, 1940, issue. In this the author, who certainly did not regard himself or his fellows as sorry objects, set forth in a matter-of-fact way just how a gentleman of the road could refurbish his stocks of clothing and provender in the Queen City of the Angels:

If you have come in on the blinds, you are probably a bit travel-stained and hence fair prey for the first squad of rag-pickers (as the police vagrancy squads are familiarly known) that spots you. Your first problem is a little valet service. Make for the Midnight Rescue Mission at Fourth and Los Angeles Streets. List your needs with the bored chap at the desk and you will be provided with the following: a shower, a haircut and shave, a shoeshine, a chance to wash and press your clothes and substitute clothes while yours are drying. . . .

But once you are presentable, the Union Rescue is a desirable spot for lunch. Plan to arrive there at 12:30 A.M. and you will have to sit through only a half hour of exhortation from the pulpit before adjourning with the other guests to the basement for a lunch that can only be described as fair: a bowl of beans and all the day-old cake and pie you can cram in. If you have missed a few meals lately and are still hungry, you might pay a call at the Bread of Life Mission, 423 East Fifth Street, for coffee and sandwiches at tea time. The sandwiches, though a trifle on the thin side, are good and the pulpit performances of your hosts (an exotic species of Holy Rollers), better than some floor shows in town. . . .

I would recommend the Salvation Army Hotel at 113 Weller Street for your first night. The beds are fairly clean, and . . . you are probably tired and in no mood to endure a two-hour sermon and the complicated business of registration at one of the Missions. . . . The following day attend the evening services at the

Union, which start at 7:30, and after supper register there. During the service, at the call for new converts, by all means "take a dive," as the boys term it, at the altar. It involves nothing more than a few moments on your knees and a hearty handshake from the high-pressure lad who leads the devotions, and it makes your bed doubly sure. . . .

If you have no principled aversion to a little real work and especially if you need clothing or other personal effects, a week or two in the Salvation Army Industrial Home on East Seventh Street is advisable. . . .

Try for the assignment as helper on one of the thirty-four trucks the Sally has scouring the residential sections for old clothes, furniture, papers and rags. . . . As helper you will earn \$2.50 a week in cash and the work is not hard. More important, the driver and the two helpers on each truck have first choice of the clothing and other things collected. In a recent three weeks' stay at the Sally I managed to provide myself with a fairly good business suit and an excellent dinner jacket, a pair of brand-new white flannels, three pairs of shoes, a leather jacket, six shirts and a couple of suitcases. Naturally, the Salvation Army frowns on this practice but even if caught you are only fired. Personally I have utilized my several brief sojourns at the home solely to replenish my own wardrobe. A number of the boys, I regret to report, stay on for months at a time and conduct a thriving business with the local second-hand dealers in clothing, books and furniture.

The material quoted in these excerpts from the "Bum's Guide" can be well used in a business talk. Let us suppose that you as a speaker are to address an audience of purchasing agents. The activity of these men, naturally, has much to do with sources of supply. Either begin your talk with some amusing items from the "Guide" or use this material later in your talk. Whichever you do, show by humorous comparison that even "on the road" systematized knowledge is necessary for success.

A short discussion of "A Bum's Guide to Los Angeles"—you could look up the complete article in almost any library—would make an excellent and unusual beginning for many kinds of

business talks. Businessmen generally would be amused and somewhat amazed at the shrewdness of those in a "profession" usually thought of as the most disorganized. Again, draw a comparison between the fund of knowledge necessary for successful vagrancy and that required for successful business.

Since businessmen realize more and more that economic problems cannot be isolated either in a community or the nation, there is increasing opportunity to introduce concrete illustrations from the more serious social problems into public talks. Most men know today that good business isn't just a matter of so much oil or coal or leather sold at a profit. Good business is dependent upon, and sensitive to, the well-being of people. Alcoholism, juvenile delinquency, prostitution, and the like will ultimately react unfavorably upon any legitimate business. Consequently, a speaker who treats of business conditions and future possibilities may gain attention and establish a point through some vivid description of an actual case from that forlorn category we call "social problems."

There are other fundamental appeals for attention. In this book a number have been mentioned—crime, nature, money, people, love, adventure. Sex and whatever that may include is so obvious an appeal in everyday American life that no one could be unaware of it. Baker's bread and even piston rings must now be peddled through overdone anatomies in tight sweaters. Mystery is another great catch-all. The writers of "who-done-its" are immensely popular, and in the past ten years the homicide bureaus of fictional tales have been swamped with premeditated, usually violent, murder. Tales of the supernatural, of hypnotism, of all strange vagaries of the mind, have universal allure. And, of course, there is always anything which involves battle. People love a fight!

It is not the purpose of this book to give an exhaustive survey of the elements which attract people's attention. It is designed to give the prospective speaker something of an introduction into

the kind of material which seldom fails to capture audience interest. Public speaking is not a science. It is not exact, like chemistry or mathematics. It is an art, but there are scientific approaches to this art. If the solid stuff of a speaker's ideas is interwoven with concrete illustrations—definite pictures—drawn from the common fund of human interest, he is well on the way toward success.

There is something else a speaker must know. He must make audiences laugh. He must be able to make them laugh. In fact, this is of such importance that, at times, it would almost seem like the cardinal principle of all effective public speaking. Never disregard it unless delivering a funeral oration or announcing a large net loss to the board of directors.

How can a speaker make an audience laugh?

If you were to discuss Babe Ruth as Paul Gallico did in his book *Farewell to Sport*, and you mentioned the following incident in the same language Mr. Gallico used, your audience would laugh:

The most harmful thing that Ruth in all his life ever did with his money was one time nearly to kill himself through over-eating. Whether or not it grew out of his early unsatisfied hunger, he was a glutton. One hot afternoon in some dreadful little Southern whistle stop on the training swing up through the cotton states on the way north, he was hungry and thirsty. Therefore he bought as many greasy, railroad-station hot dogs and bottles of arsenic-green and jaundice-yellow soda pop as he could eat and drink. Eyewitnesses say he ate twelve frankfurters washed down with eight bottles of pop.

The result was the stomach-ache heard and felt around the world.*

Why would they laugh?

Because you would indulge in a common form of humor which Americans love—exaggeration. If you said the pop was "emerald

* Reprinted from *Farewell to Sport* by Paul Gallico, by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Copyright 1938 by Paul Gallico.

green" or "shamrock green" or "grass green," your listeners would likely keep a straight face. Those descriptions might be accurate and matter-of-fact. But "arsenic green!" Arsenic is a poison used to exterminate fruit bugs and wealthy old men. The combination of such a ferocious element with a timid drink like soda pop is humorous.

Then, everyone knows about "the shot heard round the world." It signaled one of the majestic events in the history of mankind—an initial incident of the Revolutionary War and the advent of the United States of America. To speak of such a ridiculous thing as a belly-ache in the same words which are used to designate an event of world-shaking significance is manifestly exaggerated—and funny. Naturally people will laugh.

What else will make them laugh?

People are always tickled by the combination of incongruous elements. What does that mean? Let's look at an example. Here is a little story about the late John Barrymore and his solicitude for his pet buzzard, Maloney:

One evening, and at a time when Barrymore was making \$30,000 a week, the actor was strolling in town, his chauffeur following slowly after him in a limousine. On this night Jack was dressed rather shabbily. He had spent the afternoon in his aviary. Feathers and lime clung to his garments. His coat collar was turned up, for the night air was chill. He wore an old Homburg pulled low over his eyes, and was unshaven.

Jack saw a trash can near the curb. He immediately thought of Maloney. He found a stick, lifted the lid of the can, then began to explore it. He discovered a piece of old meat, put it in his pocket, and again began poking inside the can with the stick when a well-groomed gentleman of middle years and plentiful belly passed the absorbed searcher.

The gentleman looked with casual interest at the frowsy, unshaven antiquarian, who was muttering happily as he located another piece of high meat that would suit the low standards of Maloney. The stranger halted, presumably debated with himself, then reached beneath his smart topcoat, to bring a ten-cent piece

into the light of a street lamp. He held the coin gingerly toward the explorer of trash cans, as if not wishing philanthropy to exceed the bounds of sanitary precaution.

"Here, my man," said the generous stranger. "Here you are. But be sure to spend it only for food."

Jack looked up. He took the dime. Then, as the stranger stepped back quickly from the good deed, Barrymore touched the brim of his Homburg in a kind of salute.

"God bless you, sir!" said Jack throatily.*

Just about everything in this story is incongruous. It's full of situations which ordinarily do not belong together. One hardly expects to find a shabbily dressed, thirty-thousand-dollar-a-week actor poking about in a swill barrel on the streets of Beverly Hills. People do take home meat and bones for conventional pets like dogs, but here is a man with a pet buzzard! The scene of the well dressed burgher, whose income in a year perhaps did not match Barrymore's for one week, magnanimously bestowing a ten-cent piece on the actor is one of superb irony. This sort of thing usually makes people laugh.

In another incident reported by Gene Fowler in John Barrymore's biography, *Good Night, Sweet Prince*, the actor walked into a Hollywood restaurant one day and proceeded to annoy some of the more staid patrons by his pronouncements to the general clientele. A beautiful little example of the incongruous and hilarious developed:

He now gave attention to a lady of haughty curiosity, who sat in one of the horseshoe-shaped booths near a window, studying the actor through rimless eyeglasses. He bowed over her menu with a courtly manner and asked, "Madam, would you be good enough to direct me to the gentleman's room?" †

One can imagine the slack-jawed astonishment of the lady "of

* Reprinted from Gene Fowler, *Good Night, Sweet Prince* (New York, The Viking Press, Inc., 1944). Not to be read in public without the written permission of The Viking Press, Inc.

† Not to be read in public without the written permission of The Viking Press, Inc.

haughty curiosity" at such a request. This is another example of the incongruous; it is also an example of something else which delights people—the collapse of pomposity. We all love to see false pride and "snootiness" get their comeuppance.

Ludwig Bemelmans is an excellent author for the speaker to study. Two of his books, especially, *The Donkey Inside* and *Hotel Splendide*, offer novel twists in the patterns which create humor. He puts people and things together in a way to compel laughter, and his use of descriptive adjectives has a refreshing pungence. In one of the chapters of *Hotel Splendide*, Bemelmans tells of a magnificent Senegalese negro named Kalakobe. This huge African was so fascinated by uniforms that he offered to be the author's liveried chauffeur—all for love. Bemelmans, while employed at the Splendide, had purchased for very little money a sumptuous Hispano which had figured in a fatal accident with one of the guests. When Kalakobe saw the car's leopard-skin upholstery, he was enchanted with the thought of driving it; and finally his great day arrived:

On the day the Hispano was ready to run again, Kalakobe suggested that we go driving. With everything on him neat, his puttees shined, Kalakobe walked in front of me, now and then looking back to see if I was still following. At the car he smiled, stripped his lapis-lazuli ring and a gold ring from his fingers, and slipped his hands into tight black gloves. He walked once around the car, opened and closed the doors, and looked at the tires. Then he polished the already gleaming windshield and the headlights, which were as big as snare drums. Finally, without looking at me, he informed me that the most elegant way was for me to do the driving while he sat beside me. It was very chic, he said, for the boss to drive—he had seen it many times. Besides, he added, he didn't know how to drive.*

The sort of thing illustrated by the foregoing quotation makes

* Ludwig Bemelmans, *Hotel Splendide* (New York, The Viking Press, Inc., 1939). Not to be read in public without the written permission of The Viking Press, Inc., New York.

audiences laugh. A speaker should note it carefully. The quick twist at the end, the abrupt, wholly unexpected climax—"Besides, he added, he didn't know how to drive"—invariably will strike people as funny.

In another chapter of this same book, the admirable Kalakobe again provides an uproarious climax; this time, however, it is more drawn out. There was to be a great party at the Splendide. Kalakobe, attired in a flamboyant costume of chartreuse, was to carry an ancient society woman, Mme. Julian Garrand, on his shoulder and make a grand entrance in the pageant. Once in the center of the participants, Kalakobe was to set Mme. Garrand on her throne and lay himself gracefully at her feet. Russian dancers were then to execute their peculiar acrobatics, and other events were to follow. It may have been, as the author says, "the uncorked bottle" or the "loose music." At any rate, the guests were in for a surprise:

At midnight the pageant began. The *tableau vivant* started off smoothly. Mme. Julian Garrand was carried down the stairs as if she sat in the saddle of a prize stallion. Kalakobe made so festive an entrance with her that the thousand-and-some guests applauded. Mme. Garrand, without glasses, smiled to the audience and bowed left and right. All the spotlights were on them. The sixty musicians fiddled and blew the last strains of the "Marche Marocaine" and began the first bars of the bolero. The Russians came into the clear space in the center of the ballroom, and Kalakobe, with Mme. Julian Garrand on his shoulder, was in their midst. Perhaps he forgot, or perhaps the uncorked bottle and the loose music had worked on him. He refused to sit down or to put Mme. Garrand on her throne. The Russians made faces at him as they danced and told him to set her down, and for the first time a number of the guests laughed. Most of them were too startled to do anything but watch as Kalakobe's body became rigid and a strange set of motions took hold of him. He started a wild stamping, and went on dancing more and more wildly. The Russians left the floor to him. In desperation the orchestra followed his stamping and he conducted with his head, his legs,

and arms. He obtained his best effects by throwing his partner into the air, as far as his and her outstretched arms would let their bodies part. Then he jerked her back again, passed her through his legs and up over his bent back, and decorations and jewelry fell out of her as out of a shaken Christmas tree. Once she got away from him and, with her mouth wide open, her beer-blond hair streaming after her, fled toward the ring of people, but he caught her as one does a fleeing pullet and danced on. Up she flew and around and around, half mermaid, half witch, her legs bare, one shoe lost. The crowd roared at the end.*

The humorous selections quoted in this discussion of how a speaker can create laughter are not necessarily cited as actual stories to be included in a speech. Rather they illustrate situations or devices which usually will produce the desired effect. *Exaggeration has been mentioned along with the incongruous and the surprise climax. Another effective device is the framework of sarcasm.* Notice what Henry Morton Robinson does with the late Rudolph Valentino in this paragraph from his book *Fantastic Interim*:

Rudolph Valentino . . . known to millions of motion picture addicts simply as the Sheik—was a former dish-washing grease-ball with sideburns and a torrid boudoir technique. In a real-life close-up, he stood almost 5 feet, 6 inches, and would have tipped any drugstore scale at 125 pounds. But on the screen he became a combination of Don Juan, Mazeppa, Lord Byron, and Casanova—in short, the Sheik. His favorite scene was played in a tent pitched somewhere on the burning sands south of the Mediterranean; against this backdrop he would invariably kidnap, beguile, and otherwise seduce a blonde Nordic female in riding trousers, frequently Agnes Ayres. This went on for a number of years, and American audiences loved it. To millions of women Rudolph Valentino became a symbol of everything that was lacking in their Presbyterians, bookkeeping, golf-playing husbands

* *Ibid.* Not to be read in public without the written permission of The Viking Press, Inc., New York.

and lovers. When he kissed the victim of his Arabian passion, 10,000,000 American sisters swooned in unison.*

Sarcasm will produce laughter, but there are drawbacks in its use. A speaker must not offend his audience; he can be sarcastic only if he is sure no personal interests of his listeners are involved. Even at this late date—some twenty years or more after the death of Valentino—thousands of middle-aged women would not consider the above remarks about the Sheik very funny. A male audience obviously would love them.

Furthermore, sarcasm, if used in a crude or indiscriminate manner, lessens the stature of a speaker. Audiences do not respect a man with an habitually acid tongue; they like good sportsmanship on the platform.

Just as there are certain subjects which have almost infallible appeal, there are also situations and devices which usually produce laughter. Important ones have been indicated. What can a speaker do, then, to fit some of these laugh-getting situations into his talk?

The best thing for you to do is, first, sit down with your talk completely written out. Then decide upon just how much laughter you want. If it is a talk on the political irresponsibility of the American citizen, you don't want the audience in continuous guffaws. If, on the other hand, you intend a light treatment of cannibalism as it was formerly practiced in the Fiji Islands, you want steady ripples and an occasional roar of laughter. When you have decided that you want a laugh at a certain point in your talk, think over the possibilities.

For instance, a speaker who was to address a convention of nurses wished to touch upon the matter of their relatively low pay for the high type of professional service rendered. He wanted to impress them with the idea that society in general had plenty of money to pay for nursing care, although certain individuals,

* Henry Morton Robinson, *Fantastic Interim* (New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1943).

of course, did not. Statistics had shown that in 1947 Americans spent eight billion dollars for alcoholic drinks and six billion dollars at the horse races.

Since these facts were to be incorporated into the talk following several paragraphs of serious material, he wanted to give this an amusing twist. So he thought: How can one say that Americans spent eight billion dollars on liquor and make that funny? Well, what happens when people spend money for liquor? They get "drunk," "pie-eyed," or "swacked." And yet not all saloon clientele fall into one of these grotesque categories. Besides, these expressions may be too crude for this kind of talk. What can one say? What may happen to people as they sit around in cocktail bars? They become "foggy," "talkative," "amorous," or, since liquor depresses the sensibilities, they become "numb." Yes—that's it—"numb."

Then what about the horses? What is funny about a horse race? People lose their money. Yes, but that's rather grim humor. What happens after the excited shout, "They're off!" and the field thunders down the track for the first turn? What do the spectators see? They see that section of a horse farthest removed from his face disappearing in the distance. That's it! That's funny! Americans always laugh at the friendly part of a horse's anatomy.

The result of this particular analysis of humorous possibilities brought forth the following two paragraphs. These and some others from the same address were printed in four magazines and a number of West Coast newspapers.

Last year, society paid \$8,000,000,000 to sit in cocktail bars and become numb. They spent \$6,000,000,000 around the country to watch the rear end of a horse and their money disappear at Arlington and Santa Anita.

What gives you the quaint idea they can't pay for a little nursing?

In the consideration of the humor possibilities in any talk, a speaker must be able to consult a well filled notebook. A note-

book sounds dull; it sounds like drudgery and it probably is. But it is the kind of drudgery that dispels the nasty cramp of stage fright and does much to breed assurance. Whenever you read anything funny, whenever you hear anything funny, no matter whether it is a word, a phrase, a sentence, or a complete story—jot it down. It is imperative to do this. Then when you have a talk to be injected with the adrenalin of humor, you have pages of excellent material to consult.

Magazines and books are the best sources for this kind of thing. Every day conversation lays bare an occasional gem for a speaker's notebook, but most social talk is not very gay. The printed sources are more reliable.

Don't copy recent material from extremely popular magazines like the *Reader's Digest* and *Time*. Too many people read these and your humor will be stale. However, remember that human beings have notoriously short memories. Go to the older copies of the *Reader's Digest* and *Time* and other magazines in the libraries. Go, for instance, to the *Reader's Digest* of 1930 and 1931 and 1932. Look in the section of each issue designated "Patter." You'll find sure-fire laughs in those collections of sayings and wisecracks. Look into *Time* of ten years ago and before that; read the sections headed "People." The motion-picture reviews of *Time* are unusually good for sarcasm and novel adjectives. The motion-picture reviews of the *New Yorker* are also splendid for fresh twists to old subjects. Don't bother much with the so-called "humor" magazines. Often they're not very funny. The straight publications offer more sound material.

The same is true of books. "Funny" books are often a bore. But, read Thomas Heggen's *Mister Roberts*. This is a marvelous book of its kind. Notice how Heggen creates abundant, constant laughter. If you haven't already looked into it, get a copy of Betty MacDonald's *The Egg and I*. It is full of ideas for laughs. Henry Morton Robinson's book *Fantastic Interim*, already quoted from in this chapter, has page after page of brutal humor. His remarks

on politics and economics would disturb some people, but his adjectives are rich, pungent, vital. Study them. Take notes. Jot down ideas, words, phrases from these and other books. See what Paul Gallico does in this description of Primo Carnera from his above-mentioned *Farewell to Sport*:

Carnera was the only giant I have ever seen who was well proportioned throughout his body for his height. His legs were massive and he was truly thewed like an oak. His waist was comparatively small and clean, but from it rose a torso like a Spanish hogshead from which sprouted two tremendous arms, the biceps of which stood out like grapefruit. His hands were like Virginia hams, and his fingers were ten thick red sausages.

His head was large, even for the size of his body, and looking at him you were immediately struck with his dreadful gummy mouth and sharp, irregular, snaggle teeth. His lips were inclined to be loose and flabby. He had a good nose and fine, kind brown eyes. But his legs looked even more enormous and tree-like than they were, owing to the great blue bulging varicose veins that wandered down them on both sides and stuck out far enough so that you could have knocked them off with a baseball bat. His skin was brown and glistening and he invariably smelled of garlic.*

Look carefully at those descriptive bits: "thewed like an oak," "torso like a Spanish hogshead," "biceps . . . like grapefruit," "dreadful gummy mouth." Get the hard vividness of "great blue bulging varicose veins . . . that you could have knocked . . . off with a baseball bat." No pale language this! A bit stark, perhaps, but the kind of language which interests and amuses people.

Work over your talks. Take out the stale adjectives, the dull nouns. Replace them with words that spark and bristle. This is the easiest and most effective way to produce humor in any public speech. Get hold of a good thesaurus. Try different words which have approximately the same meaning. See how they sound. In

* Reprinted from *Farewell to Sport* by Paul Gallico, by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Copyright 1938 by Paul Gallico.

your experience as a speaker, try words and word combinations on different audiences. If you don't get the desired humorous effects, change and try something else. Be your own gag man. It isn't difficult if you pay attention to audiences and notice what they laugh at.

People are interested in the same things; they also have a tendency to laugh at the same remarks. About eight years ago a geology professor overheard a friendly argument about the attractions of life in Los Angeles. A man from Mason City, Iowa, said he wouldn't like the torrential rains in winter, the bald, brown hills in summer, and he knew he wouldn't like the ever present possibility of an earthquake. The Californian was instantly a match for this. He said, "Brother, we don't have earthquakes in California. They're just big movements in real estate!" The listeners roared. The geology professor has been using this in his lectures on earthquakes ever since. At the end of his discussion of earthquake phenomena with some reference to disturbances which have occurred in the Golden State, he concludes casually, "But, of course, they don't really have earthquakes in California. They're just big movements in real estate." It always brings down the house.

When you hear something good—grab it! Get it into that notebook! You may need it for a talk some time in the future.

Academic conventions are usually pretty dull affairs. Representatives in history or psychology, classical literature or speech, congregate in the Gold Room or the Florentine Roof of some big city hotel. There, attended by their fellows, they astound one another with long words and immense learning. A speaker at one of these merry meetings thought he would be rash enough to introduce a little humor into his remarks. He wanted to criticize the tendency of some academics to do easy things in the hard way. He wanted to ask whether or not certain conclusions might not be arrived at quickly rather than after weeks of ponderous investigation. He was going to suggest that even he

had been able to do this. But it all had to be gentle. So in order to dispel any idea of conceit on his part, and further to establish his point, he had to tell his listeners that ordinarily he didn't learn anything quickly. This latter statement had to be followed by some humorous example. What were the possibilities?

He thought of his own experiences in the past. He had learned to ride a bicycle, to swim, to drive a car, to use a typewriter. It had taken him an extraordinarily long time to learn all of these things, but there was nothing especially funny connected with any of them. Then he remembered that once he had gone to Wenatchee, Washington, to pick apples.

His clumsiness on the ladder, his tendency to knock more apples on the ground than he got into his sack, disgusted the orchard manager, who told him that "he was the dumbest cluck he'd had in the trees in twenty years." Here was a possibility for his talk. How could that be stated?

He decided to use the word "numbskull" instead of "cluck." "Dumbest numbskull" wasn't especially good; it was simply a repetition. He picked on something stronger—"damnedest." Then should it be, "The orchard manager told me I was the damnedest numbskull he'd had in the trees in twenty years"? No. Why not use the orchard manager's name! It's more concrete. Why not the name of the orchard, too? And then there was something else. Since there is an expression about people being "up a tree," why not use that instead of "in the trees"?

The final form of this attempt to evolve a humorous example was this:

And gentlemen, I don't learn things quickly. In 1942, when the labor shortage was severe in the northwest, I went to Wenatchee, Washington, to help pick apples. Mr. Norman Lewis, manager of the Birchmont Orchards, told me I was the damnedest numbskull he'd had up a tree in twenty years.

Did it work? Yes. Even in that solemn conclave, smiles broke out on many faces. Some laughed out loud!

Don't neglect humor. Your audience may be composed of nuclear physicists or high-pressure corporation presidents. But they're still human and they like a good laugh.

Admittedly, public speaking is in most instances a serious thing. Most speakers have a serious purpose. They want to inform or arouse or persuade. It is not their desire to be clowns or comedians. They are not primarily entertainers. However, a laugh here, a smile there, sandwiched in between serious material, has a devastating effect on American audiences. Regardless of how overwhelmingly important your message may be, you still have to get people to listen. The weight or import of what you have to say will not necessarily accomplish this. Humor is the public speaker's sorcery. Use it.

CONCLUSION

Why should anyone learn to be a good public speaker? What are the advantages? Good speaking means an immense amount of time, thought, and study. What are the reasons for all of the work entailed?

In the halcyon days of the 1920's, everyone was told that the ability to speak well, to get up and address an audience with decision and enthusiasm, was a great business asset. Colleges and universities depicted the speaker always as the commanding figure at the sales conference, the executive's banquet, the promotional dinner. To be a good speaker, according to academic and business opinion of that day, meant money, success, advancement; it meant the friendly grin of approval from "the old man," the \$60,000 English Tudor mansion in Evanston or Shaker Heights, the valued membership in the Union League Club.

In short, you learned to be a good speaker solely because it was a matter of money, prestige, and personal advancement.

What was thought about being a good citizen? What was thought about recognizing one's obligations to local, state, and national government? What was thought about the United States

of America, a country and a form of government unique in the hopes of men?

What was thought about all of these things? The answer is well known. Just about nothing.

Americans were too busy selling cheese and automobiles and radios. Even the trade in gold bricks was brisk. We prided ourselves on being a practical people, and even public speaking had to be preeminently practical—which meant that it was to be used exclusively to sell more cheese and more radios.

This frame of mind continued into the thirties, although 1929 had given us some doubts as to our practicality, and several of the cheese concerns had gone out of business. From Germany, Italy, and elsewhere, we heard vague rumors that Hitler and Mussolini and smaller fry of their variety had begun to use public speaking not to get a friendly slap on the back from Harry at the Rotary Club, but to arouse nations to vigor and to war. On December 7, 1941, we were still chiefly enmeshed in "business as usual," although Franklin Delano Roosevelt had for years used his matchless speaking powers in an Olympian effort to awaken Americans to the growing peril abroad.

What happened because of this indifference, this irresponsibility of Americans generally, is too well known. Thousands of young men exchanged their lives for a grave marker in a quiet military cemetery. Thousands of others exchanged a normal, healthy body for one crippled or damaged. The United States of America lost irreplaceable treasures of materials, and the national debt mushroomed toward three hundred billion dollars.

What is the primary purpose of good public speaking?

The primary purpose is, of course, to enable one to be an alert, participating American citizen. Any American should wish to cultivate his ability to address others so that he can take active part in the discussions which are vital to this kind of nation and government.

It is true that practiced ability to speak well does advance one

in business; it often will bring friends and the pleasant glow of prestige. However, the days of "business as usual" while the nation drifts must be over forever. If anyone is in doubt as to the highest purpose of learning to speak effectively, let him read and think about this speech of General Washington's from Maxwell Anderson's play *Valley Forge*. Some of the men of the Continental Army thought it was better to leave the Cause, to go home and take care of their farms and their businesses. Read what Washington said to them. Read it carefully—preferably aloud:

* You'll get death and taxes under one government as well as another. But I'll tell you why I'm here, and why I've hoped you were here, and why it's seemed to me worth while to stick with it while our guns rust out for lack of powder, and men die around me for lack of food and medicine and women and children sicken at home for lack of clothing and the little they need to eat—yes, while we fight one losing battle after another, and retreat to fight again another year, and yet another and another, and still lose more than we win, and yet fight on while our hair grows gray and our homes break up in our absence, and the best and youngest among us give their blood to swell spring freshets and leave their bones and marrow to flesh the hills. This is no lucky war for me. I thought it was at first. I wanted to astound the world as a military leader, but my head's grayer now and I've had enough of that. What I fight for now is a dream, a mirage, perhaps, something that's never been on this earth since men first worked it with their hands, something that's never existed and will never exist unless we can make it and put it here—the right of free-born men to govern themselves in their own way.—Now men are mostly fools, as you're well aware. They'll govern themselves like fools. There are probably more fools to the square inch in the Continental Congress than in the Continental army, and the percentage runs high in both. But we've set our teeth and trained our guns against the hereditary right of arbitrary kings, and if we win it's curfew for all the kings of the world. . . . It may not be worth the doing. When

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you deal with a king you deal with one fool, knave, madman, or whatever he may be. When you deal with a congress you deal with a conglomerate of fools, knaves, madmen and honest legislators, all pulling different directions and shouting each other down. So far the knaves and fools seem to have it. That's why we're stranded here on this barren side-hill, leaving a bloody trail in the snow and chewing the rotten remains of sow-belly on which some merchant has made his seven profits.—So far our government's as rotten as the sow-belly it sends us. I hope and pray it will get better. But whether it gets better or worse it's your own, by God, and you can do what you please with it—and what I fight for is your right to do what you please with your government and with yourselves without benefit of kings.—It's for you to decide . . . you, and your son, and the rest of you. This is your fight more than mine. I don't know how long the Congress means to keep me where I am nor how long you mean to stay with me. . . . Make your own decision. But if we lose you—if you've lost interest in this cause of yours—we've lost our war, lost it completely, and the men we've left lying on our battle-fields died for nothing whatever—for a dream that came too early—and may never come true.

